

Uncontainable (DreamTeam SCP AU)

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/30252684) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/30252684>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Major Character Death
Category:	Multi
Fandoms:	Minecraft (Video Game) , SCP Foundation , Video Blogging RPF , youtube - Fandom , Dream SMP
Relationships:	Clay Dream/GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF) , Karl Jacobs/Sapnap
Characters:	Clay Dream (Video Blogging RPF) , GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF) , Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF) , Karl Jacobs , Niki Nihachu , Floris Fundy , Eret (Video Blogging RPF) , Zak Ahmed , Darryl Noveschosch , Clay Dream's Sister Drista (Video Blogging RPF)
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - SCP Foundation , Science Fiction , Mystery , trust me it's mostly plot, but people say the romance is good too , Time Travel , Memory Alteration , Monsters , Psychological Horror , author is a sadist , The Author Regrets Nothing
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of We Are Uncontainable
Stats:	Published: 2021-03-25 Updated: 2023-06-09 Words: 109,442 Chapters: 87/?

Uncontainable (DreamTeam SCP AU)

by [JayWrites23](#)

Summary

Welcome to the SCP Foundation. Secure. Contain. Protect.
We protect the common populations from what would destroy them.
But we also protect ourselves. Our secrets. Our... demons.

When a doctor goes missing, and an eerie new SCP appears, what could it mean for Dr. George Davidson?

(First posted on Wattpad under a different username. This is my original work, on a different site and name. Enjoy!)

Events Log One: 534

Nick sighed, sitting down to his desk and his paperwork.

The new SCP was... strange.

And this was strange for Site-143, which said a lot about the nature of the anomaly itself.

Site-143 — a Humanoid Containment and Research Facility. One of the smaller sites, but one of the most *fun*. The whole place had been built just last month, a Provisionary in origin, which meant the site was built around a pre-existing anomaly. Site-143 was built around a sort of sentient pond, later shipped off to Site-19 liter by liter. With nothing to contain anymore, the small team of scientists were sent various humanoid SCP's, as they were deep buried under Denver International Airport and well out of the way.

The new shipment; SCP 534, Elucid Class, Red Threat Level. Red wasn't even that bad, it just meant unpredictable and *capable* of great harm.

Nick opened the filing cabinet on his right, wincing a little as the un-oiled *screech* of the metal tracks broke through the silence.

Pulling out a fresh SCP Documentation Form, he uncapped his favorite fountain pen and set to work.

Item #: SCP-534

Class: Elucid, Orange to Red Threat

Disruption Level: Ehki (4/5)

Risk Class: Warning (3/5)

Special Containment Procedures: Subject was flown to Denver International Airport immediately upon discovery, it arrived heavily sedated and bound. Subject has been placed in the Site's most secure containment area, according to its possible Red-Level threat. Unit is equipped with gaseous-released sedatives and pathogens. Subject seems to be averse to high levels of light, floodlights have been installed in the ceiling as a cautionary step.

Description: Subject is a form of white mass, no identifiable skin or organs, only white matter that seems to resemble flesh in texture. Subject was brought in and measured as 192 centimeters, or 6'3". Subject weighed in at 204.35 pounds.

When the Subject was found, it was considerably larger, witness accounts of Agents [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] both corroborate that the SCP was at least eight feet in height, and shrunk

once sedated. This leads Dr. Davidson and I (Dr. Armstrong) to believe that the SCP possesses shape-shifting abilities.

Subject was found wandering the Everglades, crocodile blood was found on its... face. The face resembles some kind of macabre smile, two large voids that resemble eyes, there is an iris of neon green that gives off its own light. It's mouth can only be described as carnivorous, it has one row of extremely sharp teeth that should not be touched anywhere on their surface at any time. (See Minor Injury Report # [REDACTED]) Its mouth stretches the width of its head, which is perfectly spherical.

Subject is thought to possess powers such as shapeshifting, further research will be done to test for others.

Nick set down his pen, anxiously glancing back at the darkened containment unit.

At what he saw, he screamed.

“George!”

The frazzled doctor came running around the corner, to find a disquieted Dr. Armstrong on the floor by his chair. In fright, he’d fallen.

“What is it Nick?” He sighed in annoyance, helping the man to his feet. “I thought we had a containment breach or something.”

“With this understaffed place? More likely than you’d think,” Nick muttered, adjusting the white headband he always wore. “It’s just... *it*.”

“*It*?” George crossed his arms, “Are the big, *scawy* SCPs going to scare SappyNappy at last?”

“I told you about that nickname thinking you *wouldn’t* use it against me,” Nick said. “But you should have seen it.”

They both subconsciously tilted their heads towards the darkened unit. It had white semi-walls that only came about two feet off the floor, only really there to hold the shatter-proof glass in place. The room was filled with synthesized darkness that didn’t spill out into the lightened research office, and the light from the LED overheads didn’t reach into the unit despite its close proximity.

This was because of another SCP, #3812, a Thaumiel Class (which merely meant that it was willing to cooperate with the SCP Foundation). Simply described as sentient darkness, it used to be a risk-laden Keter Class but eventually agreed to cooperate. It was brought over with SCP-534, its lightless properties thought to be possibly calming to the white monster.

Dr. Noveschosch really was the only one who dealt with SCP-3812, he and Dr. Ahmed transferred over from the Everglades Site, his relations with SCP-3812 being stronger than all others.

Glowing green rings looked at the two Doctors from inside the thick darkness.

“Good God,” Dr. Davidson said, his British accent heavy with fear.

“Not teasing me now, are we George?” Nick smiled, still uneasy.

“It’s Dr. Davidson,” he frowned, composing himself. “I have to go talk to Dr. Ahmed about the capture circumstances.”

“You can just call him Zak,” Nick called after him, as the Doctor was walking away rather brusquely. “Everyone else does...”

Nick knew better than to look back into the unit.

He *knew better*.

He did anyway.

The same green rings met his eyes, Nick felt his very soul jump out of his body.

Tearing his sight away, he returned to the matter at hand.

He wrote;

Addendum:

The Subject appears to possess some sort of hypnosis or intimidation power.

Further testing required.

The report would have to be filed under *rudimentary* until all their tests were done, then it’d be shipped off to another, larger containment facility for surveillance and containment. It’s an Ehki class — no one could afford to let that thing out of their sight.

Something about those green... *eyes*... made Nick want to know what was going on behind them.

“Geo— Dr. Davidson?” Nick called, slowly rising from his desk, eyes locked onto the glowing ones.

“What is it now,” George said, two other doctors trailing behind him. The first was a pale guy in a lab coat with mid-range brown hair, just long enough to drape over his forehead. The other was a little shorter, he had deep sandy skin and fluffy black hair.

“Hey,” the taller one smiled warmly, walking over to shake Nick’s hand. “Dr. Noveschosch! Call me Darryl.”

Nick grinned, “Dr. Armstrong, call me Nick.”

“And this is Zak, Dr. Ahmed,” Darryl dragged the shorter doctor over, who grumped at Darryl but smiled at Nick.

“Ok, I want to start testing with SCP-534.” Nick said eagerly, already pulling out his notepad and experiment logs.

“Right *now*?” Zak frowned, “We just got our stuff settled in the barracks.”

“Now,” Nick said, “I don’t know why, but this one feels different.”

“Now *that’s* never good words to hear,” Zak laughed nervously.

Nick walked over to the dark glass, the eyes nowhere to be seen.

George walked over, staring with blank curiosity into the inky depths.

BANG!

Two white clawed hands smacked up against the glass, and the face appeared soon after.

George turned around in fright, hugging himself around the arms but rooted to the spot in fear.

Nick looked into its face, it didn’t have any malice in its features.

The SCP smiled, placing its hands on the glass closer to George.

“SCP 534’s here, I think it want’s to play with you!” Nick laughed.

“Nick, I think it wants to *kill* me.”

The SCP stalked back into the darkness, disappearing from sight.

“I’m going to go in.” Nick whispered excitedly.

“Are you kidding me?” George hissed, finally moving from his stance. “You’re going to get *killed!*”

“You could come with me,” Nick offered.

“No *way!* I’m not touching that thing with a ten foot pole!” George exclaimed. “Armstrong, I swear if you go in there—”

“Zak, I’ll need you on the security panel,” Nick said, completely ignoring his friend.

“*Nick!*” George shouted, but when he continued to walk off with Darryl and Zak, he yelled, “Fine! Get killed! *Not like I care!*”

He regretted that as soon as he said it.

Fortunately the boys were out of eyesight when he’d said it, hopefully they’d been out of earshot.

They weren’t.

Nick stepped into the decontamination chamber, donning the white clothing he always had to wear when visiting an SCP in their unit.

Darryl came with as well, but only to get SCP-3812.

The double-sealed doors to the unit opened, and the darkness flooded in.

And with it, cold fear gripped Nick's core.

"Hey buddy," Darryl was *smiling*, "C'mere!"

The darkness seemed to hum with Darryl's presence, it shivered and condensed and shrunk until the room was light again, the dark blob taking shape and perching on Darryl's shoulder. He winked at Nick, before heading back to the decontamination room. He opened the door to what looked like a high-tech dog crate, and the dark blob happily stepped inside.

Nick looked into the unit.

The SCP was definitely over eight feet.

It was sitting on the floor, knees drawn up to its chest.

"Zak, you got the lights ready?" Nick radioed up to Zak, who was sitting in a control room that overlooked the unit.

He nodded from behind the protective glass, and Nick stepped into the chamber.

The SCP's eyes drifted to Nick, pinning him to the spot with its gaze.

"H-hello." Nick said, checking if it understood English.

It tilted its head to the side, as if confused.

It shrunk a little bit, eyes still looking as if they were studying Nick.

When it was done, it was smaller and yet still towering over the doctor. *It might be trying to seem non-threatening*, Nick thought.

It backed away into the corner of the room, hissing.

"Oh gosh I'm sorry—" Nick said, backing away as well.

"Dr. "

It had spoken.

"Dr-ream. "

Its voice was horrid in every sense, raspy and guttural and sounding like a thousand instead of one.

Nick was shocked, none of the SCP's in the whole Site could *speak*.

“Dream?” Nick said, and the SCP nodded. Nick pointed to his own chest. “SapNap.”

He'd used his codename for a reason — some SCP's were known to gain immense power if they knew one's true name.

“*Ssssssssap!*”

Nick nodded.

The SCP shakily pointed at itself, smiling wildly. “*Dr-eam!*”

“Dream?” Nick asked, pointing to the SCP.

It nodded, bounding towards Nick suddenly.

Nick braced for impact, and possibly, the end of his life.

But neither of those things happened.

“*Ssssssssap. Heh— heh-ullo!*”

It was right in Nick's face, who was, frankly, scared shitless.

“H-hi.”

“Armstrong that's *enough*,” George's voice radioed in, “Get out of there yourself or I'm dragging you out.”

Nick glared up at the control room, meeting George's sunglass-covered eyes.

Nick backed away from the SCP, who tilted its head and stopped smiling. It went back to the corner, and sat with its knees against its chest again.

The doors closed around Nick, who had backed up far enough to make it into the decontamination chamber.

This is going to make for one hell of a report.

Events Log Two

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Nick had no idea what to do next.

He was trembling in fear and in anticipation, grinning wildly.

“*George!*” Nick radioed, “Did you hear that?”

At that moment Dr. Davidson walked through the door, his sunglasses somehow reflecting his angry expression.

“You spoke to it.” He muttered, lab coat flaring out behind him with an invisible breeze.

“Yeah!” Nick smiled, grabbing his pen and paper.

The Subject has shown signs of sentiency! It has given itself a name, and mimicked my own speech!

“You had *no idea* how it would react!” George spat, “It could have killed you! Does that thought never *freaking come across your mind?*”

“Well yeah—”

“*I already have one dead teammate!*” George cried, before rushing out of the decontamination room.

One dead teammate?

Nick would have to investigate that later.

Darryl ran up to Nick excitedly, and a rush of incomprehensible science jargon followed could only be described as *fangirling*.

Nick met Darryl’s eyes, he looked more tired than when he’d gone off to the control room.

But that was only a matter of minutes ago—

“What’s up with Davidson?” Zak asked, breaking the stream of nerd-speak.

“That’s just George,” Nick sighed, “I’ll ask him about it later. Not that I’m going to get anything out of him, but I’ll try.”

“Do I need to release Halo back into the room?” Darryl smiled.

“*Halo?*” Zak said incredulously.

“Yeah, SCP-3812. Little buddy and I have gone through so much together, thought I’d give him a name. Halo just seemed right, remember when he just sat on my head and wouldn’t come off for a week?”

Zak looked uneasy, “You’ve been exposed to that thing a *lot*, Darryl.”

“It’s not a thing,” Darryl grinned, tapping the glass of Halo’s carrying cage. “At least I didn’t name it Mr. Squeegy—”

“Not this fish shit again,” Zak grumbled, pressing his hands to his temples. “Look, I’m *sorry*, I’ve told you,”

“Zak I’m just teasing you... you do enough to me.” Darryl’s face was pleasant, but his eyes told a different story.

Nick left them to their quarrel, returning to his desk and pulling out a tape recorder. He didn’t think he could say everything he needed to say on paper.

Click.

“This is Dr. Armstrong, Site 143, Humanoid Research section. Today we made a breakthrough with SCP 534, found proof of sentience and even *spoke* with the SCP.”

He paused the tape.

Something told him that he shouldn’t tell the SCP Foundation 534’s name.

Dream.

What is wrong with me?

He resumed the recording.

“The subject interacted with me for a minute or two, and did not seem to have malicious intentions towards me. Dr Noveschosch accompanied me to the decontamination chamber, where he recalled the Thaumiel Class, and left. I proceeded into the containment unit, where the SCP seemed to be sitting.”

Paused.

How was he going to phrase this?

Click.

“The SCP and I had an... exchange of words. I said hello to it, it learned my speech patterns and replicated it for itself.”

Do I tell them or not?

I can always add it to the next report.

“It said hello a few times, along with my nickname SapNap. That was the end of the relation, I left in case it got agitated.”

Click.

Nick ended the recording, extracting the tape and slipping it into an envelope alongside his paper report.

George walked across the room, staying far away from Nick.

Nick, of course, hopped up immediately.

“Hey!” Nick called, jogging to keep up. “Are you ok?”

“Of course,” George muttered, using his short height as an advantage in keeping his face hidden, “We have work to do.”

“Look George—”

“Doctor Davidson.”

“I’m sorry I panicked you.” Nick sighed, forcibly stopping their forward motion and turning him around by the shoulders.

“Don’t touch me,” He hissed, backing away. He didn’t look angry. He just looked sad.

He ran off, somehow faster than Nick could keep up.

Nick went to the desk again, slipping the envelope and the report into a larger envelope. He handed it off to an assistant (her name was Sylvee), who presumably rushed it off to a Hub Site.

The report would be in the system within a matter of minutes.

Darryl walked over to Nick, still carrying Halo’s container.

“Does he need to back with Dream?” Darryl sighed, waving a tiny hello to the darkness inside the container. It waved back with a tiny, fingerless hand.

Admittedly, it was a cute SCP.

Nick glanced over, Dream was still huddled up in the corner. He touched his finger to the earpiece.

“Yeah, can we get the lights lowered a little in Containment Unit Four?”

The lights dimmed in the unit, SCP Dream looked around, seeming relieved.

It smiled, watching Darryl wave to the container.

It brought its clawed hand up, stiffly waving it back and forth.

Nick smiled, it was waving at him.

“This thing *definitely* learns through mimic,” Nick commented, enthusiastically waving back. Darryl noticed, and joined in. Through the glass on the box, it could be seen that Halo did too.

“What are you all—” Zak laughed, but stopped when he saw SCP Dream waving at him. “Holy shit!”

“I know, right?” Darryl grinned, the purple underneath his eyes an oxymoron to his demeanor.

SCP Dream stopped waving once its eyes connected with Halo’s cage. It was like it shut down, or maybe the opposite. It shapeshifter again, growing into its giant state.

“It’s aggravated,” George said frantically, running into the office space. “What do I do?”

“The floodlights!” Nick yelled, and George scampered off again.

In moments, bright light beat down on the aggravated Dream, he made an ungodly shrieking noise and shrunk back down again, the lights shut off again.

“Did Halo cause that?” Darryl murmured.

“I don’t think so,” Nick frowned, “He was in there with Halo for a while before this.”

Darryl glanced over at Zak, who was clutching Darryl’s arm.

“What on earth is happening?” Sylvee raced into sight.

“It’s ok,” Nick sighed, looking at the dejected-seeming Dream.

He felt *so guilty*.

Dream was light averse.

That must have *hurt*.

Would Dream trust him again?

“Good, because we’ve got a *visitor*,” She said, and a man with sunglasses appeared from the shadows behind her.

“Greetings,” He smiled. “The name’s Eret. The SCP Foundation got your report and dispatched me from the Area codenamed *L’manberg* to assist you.”

Nick grinned nervously, he wasn’t sure if he trusted this man yet.

Even George took off his sunglasses sometimes.

Zak brushed past Eret, *accidentally* knocking his sunglasses off.

“Gosh, I’m sorry,” He said, but stopped dead in his tracks when he saw Eret’s bare eyes.

They were glowing white.

“A-are you an SCP?” Zak stuttered.

“It’s the eyes, isn’t it.” He sighed, sliding the glasses back on his face. “No, I’m not. Exposure, y’know?”

Zak nodded, shooting a look at Darryl. Darryl wasn’t paying attention, still making little faces at the SCP in the container. Zak’s eyes took on a look of pain, something between jealousy and concern that made one’s heart ache from just looking for too long.

“I’d like to run some diagnostics on SCP-534,” Eret sighed, “I believe just Dr. Davidson would suffice to help me.”

George nodded.

“Hey, what’s the latest on Site— I mean on *L’manburg*?” Darryl smiled, looking up.

“Two new humanoid SCP’s, one we’ve labeled *homosapia bombus* and the other can only be described as a plant-boy.” Eret said. “They’re quite interesting, they were found together in one of our British areas and got quite aggressive when trying to be separated.”

“Do they have names?” Nick asked curiously, regretting it quickly.

“Names?” Eret raised an eyebrow, “You mean besides their item numbers?”

“Y-yes.” Nick flushed. SCPs were nothing more than research studies, not friends, not pals, not things to fraternize with. Names have a curious power, they make something more *real*.

“Only the nicknames,” Eret revealed, and Nick perked back up again. “They’re in our T-Section. The bee-boy’s number is V880, the V for its Vlam-level Disruption Class.”

“So the bee boy’s not that aggressive,” Darryl smiled, “Muffins, I bet those two are adorable.”

“Well,” Eret continued, “Some of the scientists, Dr. Soot in particular, noticed that the designation could resemble a name. T-V800 became known colloquially as Tubbo.”

“That’s... so cute.” Sylvee added, adjusting her overlarge circle glasses.

“T-O334 is the other designation,” Eret said, “Re-named Tommy by Dr. Janssen, you’ll know him as Fundy.”

“Fundy?” Nick smiled, “That dude’s cool, even if he does have fox ears.”

“Wait *what*,” Zak laughed.

“SCP exposure?” Nick shrugged, “The last time I saw him, they were *definitely* attached and real.”

“Well...” Eret smiled, “He has a tail now as well.”

“*No way!*” Nick gasped happily, “does he like them?”

“He’s elated,” Eret gestured with his hands, “Dr. Floris Janssen is... what I would have referred to as a *furry* before I started working here.”

“Furrys should be classified as an SCP,” Zak muttered.

“What? They are!” Eret said, much to Zak’s confusion.

“Not going to ask.” He sighed.

“So SCP Tommy and SCP Tubbo... they’re symbiotic?” George asked, quietly taking out a pen.

“Yeah, they seem to be directly beneficial to eachother. SCP Tubbo’s bees keep Tommy’s plant-bits healthy, and the bees are in return kept fed.”

“So. Adorable.” Darryl squeaked, shaking Zak by the shoulders. He turned a little red, but didn’t say anything.

“I can video over to L’manburg Site right now,” Eret smiled, pulling out a transparent touchscreen device. With a few taps, a new face appeared on the screen. She had choppy bleach-blond hair and tired yet happy eyes.

“Niki!” Eret said.

“Hey Eret,” She responded, voice cutting out a little bit, “What did you need?”

“Can you show us the new SCPs?”

“Bee-boy and plant-boy?” She smiled.

“If you would,” Eret asked.

Nick, George, Sylvee, Darryl, and Zak all crowded around the screen. The camera shook with her footsteps, and eventually they made it to a containment unit.

“This is them,” She sighed, pointing the camera into the room.

SCP Tubbo was quite literally a bee-boy, he had overly large and round eyes, as well as two antennae that stuck out from his forehead. When he saw Nikki, he smiled. Around his head was a small group of bumble bees, they seemed to be a part of him almost.

SCP Tommy didn’t look as happy with life, he was nestled into a niche of plant-like material that seemed to be coming from his arms. He appeared to take the form of a sixteen-year-old

boy, with pale skin and dusty blond hair. He had the white shirt and pants of the SCPs. Some of the humanoid SCPs were more... humanoid... than others, so clothes had been issued.

Tubbo's shirt seemed to be much too large, but when Eret asked why Niki merely said that they'd given him the wrong size, but since hasn't relinquished it.

"Does he— does he have a stinger?" Nick asked excitedly.

"Not that we can tell, but his fingernails seem to serve the same purpose, they're abnormally sharp." Niki sighed, "He likes to hide his hands in the sleeves of the shirt."

"Awe," Darryl chimed in, "he's afraid of stinging you!"

"Perhaps," She frowned.

Eret said goodbyes and shut off the video call, returning to look at Dream's containment unit. The SCP was still cowering in the corner, hiding its face.

Sorry buddy.

"Do you want to start ability diagnostics?" Eret asked, and George nodded. Nick headed off with Darryl and Zak (Darryl had said that Halo wanted to say hello to them), while Sylvee made her excuses to go examine at a Safe-Class bovine SCP that seemed to have no intestines.

George quietly swished solutions around in a test tube, they were skin scrapings from when SCP-534 was sedated.

"George?" Eret asked. George gritted his teeth at the use of his first name, but didn't protest.

"Yes, Eret?"

"No offense, but what's a nice guy like you doing in the Foundation?" Eret said, taking up another test tube and recording the contents. "It's just... you don't seem like the type to be ___"

"Eret."

George gripped hard onto Eret's shoulder, turning him to look George in the eyes. His sunglasses were on top of his head, revealing yellow-discolored irises.

"Let's just change the subject." George smiled menacingly.

Eret gulped, not expecting the small man to be so... *intimidating*. He nodded.

"I think I'm going to into the Unit," Eret said, "With proper backup, of course."

George nodded in approval.

"Backup" referred to a high-power flashlight and a concealed handgun.

But when the seals opened, Dream got agitated, growing again and making snarling noises at the doctor. Eret backed away, the clawed hands of the SCP making him fear for his existence.

He safely made it back to the decontamination, sealing the doors behind him.

“George?”

“Yeah.”

“We need to get Nick back in here.”

Chapter End Notes

Hey! As this is a re-upload, i'll be posting most of what i have in one go. Unfortunately I have to re-write some things that were lost, but it'll be fun.

Love y'all, and I'm so glad to be back!!!

Jay <3

Events Log Three

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The doctor in question ran down the sterile white hallway as soon as he heard, racing back to Dream's unit.

"Is he ok?" He called.

"I'm fine." Eret sighed, "Gave me a scare though."

Nick couldn't bring himself to tell them he wasn't talking about Eret.

"Armstrong I know that look," George warned, "Don't."

"I'm going in."

"He's still *angry!*"

"I can calm him down!"

"Nick *no*—"

But it was too late, the brown-haired scientist had already sealed the first stage of the decontamination behind him, trapping George outside.

Dream was still angered, stomping around the unit like some sort of orc-ish giant. When he saw Nick, he started towards him.

"*Sssssssap.*" The SCP snarled, "*Huh-ullo!*"

It seemed to settle a little bit, stringing down infinitesimally the longer that Nick stayed in the unit with it.

"Hey." Nick smiled, it was apparent that Dream had no intention of hurting him. "Are you ok?"

Dream paused, tilting its head as if in analysis.

"*Wh-hat... oh-kay?*"

"That you are not injured," Nick said, trying to find wording simple enough. When Dream was confused, he drew a line across his throat, "injured."

Dream nodded, repeating the same action, "*Inn-jewered.*"

"Are you injured?" Nick asked.

Dream shook its head vigorously. *“Am oh-kay.”*

This felt like a fever-dream to Nick — a standard SCP shipment from Florida had turned into the most important research project of his career in a matter of hours.

George walked up to the glass, looking scared and angry and guilty all at the same time.

Dream raised a clawed hand, pointing directly at the doctor.

“Sssssssap?”

“No,” Nick laughed, “that’s George.”

“Ge-oar-juh!”

It smiled, *“Ge-oarjuh Ge-oarjuh Ge-oarjuh!”*

Nick nodded. Eret appeared by George behind the glass, and Dream pointed to him as well.

“B-bad ma-man.”

Since the glass was soundproof, there was no way of either outside people hearing what Dream said.

Nick snapped his focus to Dream. “What do you mean?”

“Bad ma-an.”

It had shrunk again, to just over Nick’s height. It sat on the floor again, back at the knees-to-chest pose it liked so much.

“W-want Ge-oar-juh.”

Nick raised his eyebrows, George didn’t want to come anywhere near Dream.

“I’ll go get him,” Nick smiled.

“N-no le-leave,” Dream’s voice rose a bit at the end, looking up from its diminished height.

Nick’s heart melted a little bit. Touching his earpiece, he radioed in to Dr. Davidson.

“The SCP’s asking for you.”

“Bloody hell. Tell it I’m not coming,” George hissed over the wires.

“It might get agitated if you don’t—”

“Ge-oarge?”

“...Fine.”

George entered the airlock, suiting up and stepping into the room.

“If it kills us, it’s your fault,” He said coldly. “Hello, SCP-534.”

“Ge-oarge? Are oh-kay?”

“Is it asking if I’m ok?” George raised an eyebrow.

“Yeah,” Nick smiled.

“I’m fine, thank you,” George responded. Dream was still sitting on the ground, it pointed at the ground in front of it.

Nick immediately sat down with it, enjoying the smile the action produced.

“You too, Dr. Davidson,” Nick said, trying not to provoke the doctor.

“T-thank you for being formal,” He stuttered, climbing down to the floor to sit cross-legged.

“Ok so we know it can shape-shift,” Nick said, getting out his paper and pen, “I wonder if it can do it on command.”

“Well then ask it.”

“Hey Dream,” Nick said, and its eyes swiveled from George to meet Nick, “Can you get big?”

“B-big?”

Nick gestured with his hands, miming something growing. Dream nodded understandingly. It closed its eyes, concentrating. It grew by a little, not nearly as much as it had been when angry. But it still worked.

After fastidiously recording the experiment in his notebook, Nick had an idea.

“Can you become... a dog?”

“What d-ohg?”

Nick pulled out his phone, and looked up a picture of a malamute. “Dog.”

It nodded excitedly, screwing its eyes shut again and beginning to change form. George was agape, and Nick was just grinning stupidly.

After a few seconds, a white dog was in front of them, fur-less but otherwise very dog-like. Apart from the haunting eyes, of course.

Nick scribbled down what he saw, but the dog only remained for a few more seconds before returning to the Dream form.

“Sssssssleep.” It said, voice weaker than it had been.

“You need rest?” George said, noting it down.

Subject requires rest after shapeshifting into something new.

It nodded.

“Ok,” Nick smiled, “Let’s go, Davidson.”

George acknowledged and stood, as did Dream. It waved meekly as they left, smiling a little.

“B-b-bye Sssssssap! B-b-b-bye Ge-oarge!”

As soon as they were out of airlock, Nick rushed back to his desk.

“That was *awesome!*” He exclaimed, scrambling to find the right form.

“I can’t contest that,” George smiled softly.

“Halo’s ready to go back in,” Darryl’s voice sounded, walking back into the office space.

“Ok good,” Nick said distractedly, “Be careful not to go in there yourself, just Halo.”

Darryl nodded, off for the airlock.

Dream had retreated back to the corner.

Eret appeared by Zak and Sylvee, walking towards Nick.

“It’s not my place to say this,” Eret began, “But is Dr. Noveschosch alright with the amount of SCP exposure he’s getting?”

“He’s *way* too ok with it,” Zak huffed, “I mean, both of us are already screwed when it comes to exposure, but that Halo thing is *always* with him.”

Nick raised an eyebrow, “Is it possible that Dr. Ahmed is *jealous* of a SCP?”

George grinned, his sardonic sense of humor taking hold.

“I said that out of concern,” he sputtered, “I’m worried its going to start physically altering him.”

“You’re one to talk, diamond boy,” Eret laughed.

“C-can we not talk about the diamonds?” Zak said dejectedly. “I really hate them. They itch.”

Nick took pity, quickly shutting down the whole *diamond* discussion. “Maybe that’s the *reason* he’s concerned Eret?”

Nick’s tone was biting, quieting the man in the sunglasses.

When Zak said that he was screwed when it came to exposure, he meant it.

He and Darryl were working with a geological-type SCP that lived in a diamond mine in Africa. Zak knew there was something weird about the *perfectness* of the jewels found in the mine itself, but no one believed that it could be an SCP. He spent a lot of time proving himself right, and in doing so he'd over-exposed.

Now, there were diamonds encrusted on the skin along his spine, down the center of his stomach. Some also presented on the back of his hands, which was why he always wore large sweatshirts.

And apparantly, they itched.

Darryl had told Nick earlier in warning, as a kind of *don't-bring-this-up* warning. He'd mentioned that the diamonds were actually really pretty, and weren't grotesque at all (as most over-exposure mutations are quite gory in nature). Nick didn't question *why* Darryl had seen them in such detail, and left it at that.

Time passed, filled with experiment reports and excited theorizing. Often glances were stolen at the pitch black unit, hoping to see a glimpse of the glowing green.

And then they did.

Tap tap tap.

Dream woke Nick from a nap, his pen writing a line on his cheek as he startled out of slumber.

"Hey Dream!" he said cheerily. He saw his reflection in the glass, and hurriedly got to cleaning the line. Dream found this funny, smiling widely and recreating something that sounded vaguely like a laugh.

"George, you up for another round of testing?" he said.

George sighed, "You're never going to stop calling me that, are you."

"Unfortunately, its a habit I can't break."

"Fine. You can refer to me as George."

Nick did a tiny fist-pump, which Dream cautiously re-enacted.

Darryl ran in to grab Halo, and sitting in decontamination for a bit so that Halo could be out of his cage.

Nick and George went back into the room, equipped with a notepad and a list of various things they'd like Dream to shift into.

A cat, a box, a table, a vase, a star.

After a few more, Dream returned to his normal state.

Dream grinned, “*Am oh-kay. No sssssssleep.*”

Nick grinned wickedly, as the list had been completed and they now had free rein outside of the formal experiment.

“So Dream, since you can shape-shift...” Nick had to force a giggle down, and whispered something into Dream’s ear.

“What—”

Too late to turn back, Dream changed shape growing and morphing.

“*WAIT DREAM I WAS JOKING—*”

“Nick you DUMBASS!” George yelled, averting his eyes from the sight.

Let’s just say that Nick wasn’t the most... *mature* of people. Both the boys were blushing horribly, as Dream morphed back into his regular form.

“Nick, *never* do that again.” George deadpanned, before bursting into laughter.

Nick joined in as well, both of them giggling like schoolchildren.

“I guess you could say the guy’s really a *giant dick*,” Nick muttered, which sent George into a whole new fit of laughter.

In a few minutes they calmed down, smiling.

“We’re going to have to delete some footage.” George grinned.

“I’m going to go do that,” Nick said, laughing a little to himself before leaving for the airlock. “Could you stay with him for a little longer.”

George eyed the SCP nervously, it was looking curiously at the doctor. “Sure,” he replied.

After Nick left, George thought he’d try to teach Dream some new words.

Doctor.

Yes.

No.

Help.

Play.

Can’t.

Can.

Danger.

Safety.

Enemy.

Friend.

George paused after *friend*, as Dream looked like he was starting to get a little overwhelmed.

He hadn't slept in three days, the nightmares were back again. He'd had them on and off since he was little, but they'd never been so bad.

All they were ever were about were his old labmate... someone he'd gotten a little too close to and paid the price.

The more you love someone, the more it hurts.

George felt his thoughts drift to him, the boy he'd worked with since he came to the Foundation.

That is, until last month.

He'd been a tall blond, with tan skin and a killer wheeze that was as infectious as anything in a Biohazard Site.

Dr. Clay Anderson, the boy who'd broken George's heart.

He'd never seen the body.

The murder was never reported in the filing system.

He'd just... disappeared. He took an IQ test one day, had phoned George to tell him that something really *wonderful* had happened and that he was coming over to talk about it.

He never arrived.

I wonder if he could shift into a human, George thought, that'd be cool to see.

"Doc..."

"Wha—"

George lifted his head, almost falling back in shock when he saw what Dream had shifted into.

There, sitting before him, was a perfect replica of Clay.

George's Clay.

"Hi... Doctor George!"

Chapter End Notes

I'm probably gonna go radio silent on A/N until I run out of things to upload tonight-
lmao see you on the other side!!

jay <3

Events Log Four

“ArmstrONG!” George yelled over his shoulder, as the doctor was in the process of re-entering.

“What is it—” Nick gasped happily, “*Holy shit!*”

George had a storm in his eyes. “What did you show him.”

“Huh?” Nick smiled, running over to Dream.

“*Hi SapNap!*” He said, hiding his face behind his hands sheepishly.

“Nick,” George muttered, “When did you show him Clay?”

“I have no idea who that is,” Nick shrugged, “Wait... are you talking about Dr. Anderson? The *missing* Dr. Anderson?”

“*Yes,*” George hissed.

“And didn’t you used to—”

“*Yes.*”

“Oh dude,” Nick sighed, “I’m sorry.”

“Do you *promise* you never showed him any pictures of Clay?”

“I don’t even have any...” Nick mumbled.

The realization hit both of them at the same time.

“Then how did he know what Clay looked like?” They said in unison.

George thought back to the moments before it happened.

“*Are you oh-kay?*” Dream said, eyebrows furrowed in concern. His voice was much more pleasant in this form — but it seemed to hurt George with every word.

All too familiar in this form, Nick supposed.

“I was...” George sighed, “I was thinking about him. Right before it happened.”

Oh, George. Nick thought in sympathy. It had only been a month since it happened. Rumor had it that he hadn’t slept since Clay disappeared.

Dream nodded, “*Clay is good man.*”

George’s eyes snapped up to meet Dream’s emerald ones.

“Nick,” George said urgently, “Either he’s actually *met* Clay before or...”

“Or Dream can read minds.”

Dream smiled (it was a really cute smile). *“Like watching movie!”*

Neither of them realized that Dream had said ‘*is*’, instead of ‘*was*’.

“What am I thinking,” Nick grinned.

“Something called... rah-men?”

Nick smiled widely, “Dude.”

Dream looked concernedly to George, and closed his eyes. *“You... in-jewered. Are you oh-kay?”*

George looked up from his notebook in surprise, Nick noticed it was the first time he’d made eye contact with Dream’s human form.

“I’m fine, Dream.” He smiled sadly.

Dream shook his head, stating with confidence, *“You’re in-jured. Pain, pain in chest.”*

He had his eyes screwed shut, his face twitched into emotions of hurt. *“Ge-orge hurt so much.”*

“That’s enough, Dream.” George said sternly, but the SCP didn’t listen.

“S-so tired. Doctor George so tired. He has scary sleep,”

“*Dream!*” George shouted, a little louder than he had intended.

Dream shuffled away at the outburst. *“Want to help Doctor George.”*

George sniffed, still criss-cross on the floor. “I’m sorry, Dream.”

His sniffs became a little louder, he turned his face away from Nick.

Was he crying?

Dream came forward again, shapeshifting.

When he was done, he was a little blob creature, with a spherical head and a body that looked kind of like a rounded cone, it tottered forward on tiny legs towards George. its eyes were big and shiny, not anything like his normal form’s.

“Aw...” George whispered, as the little blob man sat right in George’s lap, burying his face into George’s lab-coat.

“C-can help. No more scary sleep.”

George looked down at the creature, “Really?”

Dream nodded. It hopped out of George’s lap, morphing into its... natural form.

Still scary as hell.

“*Need... Ssssssssleep.*” It growled, admittedly sounding tired. George nodded, a little crestfallen that Dream hadn’t done *whatever he was going to do*, and walked away.

“*Like...*”

Nick looked up at the SCP. It was in its giant form, so its knee came up to about Nick’s head (as he was still sitting on the floor.)

“*Like Sssssap. Like Ge-oarge.*”

Nick smiled, “You like us?”

Dream nodded.

“Well we like you too,” Nick laughed, wrapping his arms around one of Dream’s legs.

“*W-what doo-ehng?*” Dream asked nervously.

“It’s called a hug,” Nick giggled.

Meanwhile at L’Manburg...

“Tommy’s getting territorial again,” Wilbur sighed, video-calling Niki on his foundation issued phone.

“I’m coming over from the left wing,” She sighed, “He seems to like women.”

Wilbur nodded, ending the call.

“What’s up?” Fundy said, strolling up to Wilbur with his hands in his lab coat pockets. A little bit of tail could be seen sticking out from under the coat’s hem.

“Hey, fox-man,” Will laughed, “Tommy’s not letting us take the bee honey again.”

Tubbo’s bee colony was the most productive that any of them had ever worked with, their hive in the corner of the containment unit had to be harvested twice as often than a normal hive.

The unit itself was special, it had been outfitted with trees, and grass, and a small pool of water that Tubbo liked to just *stare* into. It was cute when he did it, but still.

“Well at least Eret’s gone,” Fundy shuddered, “Tommy *really* didn’t like that guy.”

“I wonder why,” Will frowned, “He was always so nice to us.”

“*Us* being the key word,” Fundy crossed his arms, his left ear twitched once. “We have no idea how he treated those two before they got here.”

The two SCP’s had arrived together, alongside an... overseer. Eret.

They didn’t know his last name, nor if he had a doctorate or not.

Just *Eret*.

Tommy had hated Eret since he’d woken up in the containment unit, and protected Tubbo with what seemed could be his life.

Tubbo was kind of clueless when it came to Eret, but his eyes always got a little more dilated and a little more scared. He never showed aggression.

When Niki showed up, Tommy calmed visibly. He had grown a thicket of vines around himself. Tubbo, and Tubbo’s bees, a thorny wall that was loosely held together and had gaps large enough to see clearly through but not penetrate.

Some of the thorns retreated back into the vines when Niki entered the enclosure, wearing a beekeeping outfit.

“Hey Tommy,” She smiled, gently moving a vine to the side so he could see her face. He smiled. “I promise I won’t hurt him.”

They’d long since known that Tommy didn’t really care for his own safety.

Tommy held a trembling hand through the vines, extending his pinky in the universal sign of *promise*.

Niki completed the promise, entwining their little fingers. “I promise.”

Tommy nodded, and the last of the vines retreated back into his skin. The plant-matter horn he had on the left side of his forehead went back to pretty flowers, instead of angry thorns. A few bees buzzed around him, taking nectar from flowers that grew on the little stems that protruded from his arms.

Tubbo was nuzzled up to Tommy’s side, asleep. Tommy winced a little as he picked one of his own flowers and placed it gently behind Tubbo’s ear. Another grew in its place, and a few bees chose to visit.

With Tommy’s nod, Niki carefully started smoking out the bees.

Tubbo woke, and started a bit at the sight of the smoke. Tommy wrapped his arms around the bee-boy protectively, squeezing him to say that it was alright. He calmed, but got up from the

grass and moved to the opposite corner. Tommy came with. Tubbo noticed the flower in his hair, and turned to Tommy with a happy smile.

Soon enough, Niki had a few standard Foundation containers with golden honey. She waved goodbye to the SCPs, and exited the enclosure.

“You never cease to amaze me,” Wilbur laughed.

“*May I help with anything?*” A new voice sounded. It was deep and monotone, having the unique property of sounding both bored and interested at the same time.

“Oh hey T-Ec820,” Fundy smiled, turning to see the SCP standing with them. He wore the white clothes that Tommy and Tubbo also had, but he had a little badge on his chest that showed the Thaumiel symbol. He’d been at L’Manburg since discovery, but his heightened powers of speech made it so he was upgraded to Thaumiel Class. A helper SCP. “Nothing as of yet.”

He smiled, large bottom canines flashing.

“We really should give him a name,” Niki sighed, “We did it with the others, we should with him too.”

T-Ec820 was a hybrid, or a cross between a human and something else. For him, he was a pig-hybrid. Niki had seen others like him, and most of the others had turned out a lot less easy on the eye.

The thing about hybrids was that they were never born naturally. (Except for a certain SCP known as Minotaur, they had him at Site-19. His ‘creation tale’ was a sight to behold, something that one couldn’t really *unsee*.) He’d volunteered, something about life not finding meaning for him yet.

There was a lot of shady shit going on with the volunteer program, but Wilbur knew of a few scientists that started investigating and disappeared weeks later.

One of them had caused a huge stir because of his boyfriend — really nice dude. Wilbur couldn’t remember his name, but he’d met the man once. Blonde, tall, handsome.

There were tons of conspiracy theories about it, but kept quiet as to not be singled out. The most popular one currently was that the missing people were turned into Thaumiels like T-Ec820, hybrids that could be *created*.

“We could do the same thing we did with Tommy,” Fundy shrugged, “First three letters are *Tec* but the rest have to be translated. The eight kind of looks like an *h*, that’s *Tech*. I guess the last two could be *no*,”

“Techno?” Niki smiled, “That’s nice.”

“Could be cooler,” Wilbur frowned, “How about Techno-*blade*!”

“That’s... literally stupid.” Fundy grinned, but Niki was nodding excitedly.

They knew better than to argue with Niki.

“Technoblade it is,” Fundy grumbled, “You like that?”

Techno nodded, dusty pink hair falling over his eyes. *“That’ll suffice.”*

He walked away, presumably to go file paperwork or something. Feed the SCPs.

“We’ve got to get him some combat training,” Will sighed, “Hybrids are good for that type stuff. Remember SCP S-Ch1477? The ram hybrid?”

“Oh yeah,” Fundy said, scratching behind his ears, “He was super smart, right?”

Will nodded. “We can’t give him a gun though, that’s a disaster waiting to happen.”

“We have some swords in the armory,” Niki said, to everyone’s surprise.

“What?”

“Yeah,” she said sheepishly, “there are some SCPs that are immune to bullets.”

“We’re going to have a sword-wielding pig on our side,” Fundy laughed incredulously, “This is going to be epic.”

Wilbur turned to look back at the enclosure, Tubbo was happily playing with a bee. He was humming along at it, something he did quite often.

The doctors weren’t sure if they were capable of speech or not, but they weren’t going to force it.

Tommy was smiling, and watching his friend.

The flower on his horn grew a little bigger.

Events Log Five

George woke with his alarm, groggily rolling over in his bed.

Only empty space greeted him, sending the doctor into a state of instant alarm.

On the pillow to his left, there was a small sticky-note.

George <3

Testing day today! I don't know why they're having

me do it, but apparantly I'm a special case... Oh

well. I made you some waffles, they're on the

kitchen counter. I love you! ~Clay

Clay's testing... right. George was completely mystified as of why, it had been sudden. All George knew was what Clay knew, that he had been exposed a lot and needed to come in for testing. They were also doing some IQ testing, Clay was kind of known at Site-19 for being one of the brightest doctors on site.

George saw the waffles on the counter, still slightly warm.

He heated them up in the microwave, thanking the stars that his boyfriend had thought to make breakfast. Why'd he have to be up so early anyway?

Clay had been... distracted recently. Besides his breakthroughs with Hybrids (There was a really cool pig hybrid last week, he was kinda cute too), he worked with the most complex and dangerous SCPs the Site had to offer. Of course he wasn't to talk about the Apollyon Class stuff, but he did anyway. The two of them weren't just lovers, their souls were really tied in bonds of friendship as well.

Something Clay had said the day before...

"Eret and I are so close to finding it."

He muttered it to himself, but the phrase had stayed rent-free in George's mind since.

Him and Eret.

Who's Eret?

===== **Earlier that Morning**

Clay was walking down the corridor, lab coat casually slung over his shoulder. He checked his watch with a soft smile, George would be waking up right about now.

“Hey Eret,” Clay smiled, “Did they pull you for testing too?”

“I’m already screwed over,” Eret laughed, tipping the rim of his sunglasses down to show his luminescent eyes. “Not much to do.”

“Ah,” Clay grinned, “I wonder what kind of mutations I’d go through if I over-exposed.”

Eret shrugged, “Let’s go find out.”

“What do you mean?” Clay stopped in his tracks.

“...Just one of the tests.” Eret smiled, it was a little unsettling. “Data projections of what you’d have gone through.”

“Oh.” Clay muttered, still a little disquieted.

He ruffled his blond hair, still a little peaky with sleep.

“Anything else on the volunteer program?” Eret said, hushed.

“Nothing else yet...” Clay sighed, “But my Hybrid clearance is helping a shit ton.”

“Y’know,” Eret responded, “I wonder if all the volunteers are really volunteers.”

“Exactly what I was thinking.” Clay whispered, excited. “I snuck into a storage Site a few weeks ago, they have memory equipment.”

“Memory?” Eret’s eyes widened. Or at least, Clay thought they did.

“Yeah.” Clay murmured. “This is getting... this is getting bad, Eret.”

He nodded.

“In here,” Eret said, directing the taller man to a room to the left.

Clay followed him, seeing a hospital bed and an IV machine filled with neon green liquid.

“W-what’s going on?” He muttered, backing up slightly.

The door had closed behind him.

“Thaumiel,” he commanded, and Clay felt a hypodermic needle sink into his neck. He immediately weakened.

There it was, the pig-hybrid he’d helped create. Pink hair and blue eyes, it was staring down at Clay mercilessly.

“Wha—” Clay collapsed to the floor, unable to stand.

“It was never meant to be.”

=====

“George..?” A female voice said, sounding from behind the despondent doctor.

He turned through salty eyes to see Sylvee, watching him curiously.

“What happened?” She asked gently.

George quickly wiped his eyes on his sleeves, but it was no use.

“Oh goodness,” She whispered, “Shhhhhh. It’ll be ok.”

“Will it though?” He said, voice breaking. “Dream... he looks *just* like him.”

Sylvee understood immediately. “That’s... that’s awful.”

“You ok?” Eret said, walking up to George with a look of concern.

Eret.

“Eret and I are so close to finding it.”

With all these memories of him re-surfacing after George had pushed them down, he’d almost forgotten the name *Eret*.

“You worked on something with him,” George said, his voice returning to composure.

This was important.

“Y-yes,” Eret said, surprised. “We both worked with Hybrids.”

George nodded, “Did you see him at all, the morning he disappeared?”

Eret shook his head, “I punched into the lab a solid hour after he did most mornings.”

Wait.

I never said anything about morning.

I didn’t see Clay until evening.

From my point, it could have happened at any time.

Something’s wrong.

“Thanks for your concern Sylvee, Eret.” George nodded curtly, walking off to go find Nick.

He was at his desk, snoring.

“Get up, moron,” He hissed, poking his cheek.

“*I’m awake*,” He sputtered, jack-knifing into an upright position.

George rolled his eyes, “Did you file the report yet?”

“Which one?”

“The one about Dream’s... human form.”

“Oh! Not yet—”

“Re-write it.” George commanded, snatching the report from his desk.

“*Hey*,” Nick scowled, “Why?”

“There’s something wrong here,” George pushed his glasses to the top of his head, so that he could look Nick in the eye. “*Seriously* wrong.”

Nick raised an eyebrow, “And what does the report have to do with anything?”

“No one can know what we saw.”

“You mean Clay?”

George shushed him quickly, “Yeah.”

Nick nodded. “Ok.”

“Meet me in the containment unit at 2100 hours,” George whispered, darting his eyes at Dream’s unit.

Nick nodded again.

As George left the office, he brushed past Eret.

He could feel those soulless eyes watching him the whole hallway down.

=====

Darryl waved goodbye to Halo, and ran to the bathroom.

But when he looked in the mirror, he almost screamed.

The top-left portion of his face was withering, fading to monotone black. One of his eyes had greyed over, looking the same as Eret’s.

A small horn was forming on the left side of his face.

He got his phone out, dialing Zak.

“Hey Darry, I—”

“ZAK! Oh thank muffins, I need you.”

“What’s wrong?” He said.

“I just... First bathroom on the left hallway.”

“Ok.”

The call shut off.

Soon, there was a knock on the door.

“Zak?” Darryl called, voice breaking a little bit.

“Yeah!” He said, “Lemme in!”

Darryl unlocked the door, and quickly hid his face.

“Hey,” Zak said, “Why are you turned?”

“Just...” Darryl sighed, “Don’t scream.”

“Promise.”

He turned, and Zak clasped a hand to his mouth.

“What is THAT?”

“I don’t know,” Darryl was tearing up, “I get it. I’m a monster.”

Zak’s face set in stone.

“You are not a monster,” He said, taking Darryl by the shoulders.

“Look at me—” Darryl cried, and Zak placed a hand on the boy’s cheek.

“I am.” Zak smiled, “And I still see Darryl, the same loving, caring, amazing doctor that I’ve always known.”

Some of the black faded away, the horn absorbed back into his scalp.

Darryl buried his head in Zak’s chest, sobbing.

After a few moments, all trace of the horrors was gone.

“Thanks, Skeppy.”

Zak giggled at the nickname, looking into Darryl’s jade-green eyes.

“Always.” He sighed, pulling Darryl back into a hug. Darryl’s hand found a handhold on the diamonds on Zak’s back.

“I love you, muffin.” Darryl laughed.

“I...” Zak stuttered, “I love you too.”

Events Log Six

Seven o'clock.

Eight o'clock.

Nine o'clock.

Nick waited anxiously for the time to come, and he walked anxiously down the red-lit hallway. His barracks were really close to the office, so that was a good thing.

SCPs glared at him through the glass of their containment units — their eyes told stories of unknown horrors that would befall Nick should they ever get free.

He noted them down, Euclid Class, Keter Class, Euclid, Euclid...

Thaumiel.

Where was Halo?

"Psssst!" Nick jumped when he heard the voice, it was George.

"Good grief you scared me," Nick sighed, walking over to the doctor. They suited up over their PJ's, and entered Dream's unit.

"Sssssap? Ge-oarge?" Dream hissed, only the rings of his eyes visible in the dark.

"It's just us," George said, looking around nervously. The unit was soundproof, there was no one that could listen.

Unbeknownst to them, someone was in the control room.

He slipped the headset on, microphones in the unit picking up their voices clear as day.

"F-f-friends." Dream smiled in the dark, the doctors could vaguely see him morphing.

"Ok, so now that we're —EEK!" George shirked.

"What's wrong?" Nick hissed, panicked.

"It's... it's ok," George sighed through gritted teeth, "Nick, did you teach Dream what a hug was?"

"Y-yes." Nick said sheepishly.

"That... makes sense." George muttered. "Dream, thank you, but..."

"Doctor George still hurt. When Dream hurt, Nick give hug! Made better."

Nick couldn't see George wrap his arms around the taller SCP, the action reminding him all too much of days long past. Nick couldn't see when George buried his face in Dream's chest, and Nick couldn't see when George dug his fists into Dream's shirt, not wanting to let go again.

"Doctor George?" Dream said, and George looked up. *"You need sleep."*

He laughed humorlessly, "Yeah Dream, I do."

"How long has it been?" Nick asked cautiously.

"Uh... more than a few days." George admitted, "It started when..."

"Ah." Nick said.

George remembered the contents of his pockets.

"Dream," George said, untangling his arms from the SCP, "Have you ever met this person before?"

He brought out a stack of photos, and a flashlight.

"Light-stick hurts."

George hadn't even turned it on, "What?"

"P-please don't hit me."

Nick got very concerned very quickly. "Dream, we would never."

"P-promise?"

"Promise." George piped up, "Now, I'm going to turn on the flashlight, I promise I won't aim it at you."

Dream nodded in the dark, and George carefully flicked on the flashlight. He turned it to the photos, it was Clay's Foundation ID photo.

"Dream," Dream said proudly, pointing to himself. *"Me."*

"No," George said frustratedly, "This is Clay Anderson."

"N-never met." Dream shook his head, confused. *"Clay... good man."*

"Why do you keep saying that if you've never met him?" George hissed.

"Can... I can tell good men and bad men."

"Well that's gotta be his longest sentence yet," Nick said happily, "And he's getting better about not referring to himself in the third person."

“Not right now, Nick.” George muttered. “Dream, are you *sure* you’ve never met Clay before?”

“Don’t... I don’t know.” Dream started to look upset, *“Don’t know how... but know Clay. Never met, but know.”*

“Wait, Dream can read minds,” Nick said, “can you um... find Clay?”

“I can try...” He smiled, closing his eyes.

After a few deadly silent moments, he opened his eyes again.

“I’m sorry, Doctor George...” Dream whimpered, hugging onto him again, *“George like Clay very much. Can’t find him.”*

George let out a kind of anguished cry, and sunk into Dream again.

Dream looked at Nick wildly, *“Did I hurt Doctor George?!”*

Nick shook his head, “No, buddy.”

Dream’s head snapped up. *“Danger.”*

George’s eyes widened, he snapped off the flashlight. “Where?”

“Danger.” he repeated again, letting go of George. He took Nick and George each by a wrist and led them over to the absolute corner of the unit. He pushed them gently as far into the corner as possible, then began morphing.

He grew past his normal giant form, quite a bit. He must have been eleven, twelve feet in height when he was done. Before George or Nick could move from the corner, Dream sat on the floor in front of them, his back up against the corner, shielding the doctors from view.

Dream let out some very fake-sounding snores, and the sound of the sound of the airlock opening could be heard.

Nick peeked out from under Dream’s arm, it was Zak.

What was he doing here? His and Darryl’s barracks were in the Keter Class wing.

“Hey,” He said cautiously. Dream growled a little bit.

“I’m unarmed,” Zak sighed, turning around for Dream to inspect him. Nick watched as Zak lifted up the shirt he was wearing, revealing the diamonds that lined his stomach and spine. Darryl was right, they were pretty. “See? I’m like you.”

George could feel Dream ease a little.

“Are... friend?”

Zak nodded, “Friend.”

He sighed, "Look, I need your help. My friend, he's... sick."

Dream shifted in his seat.

"And that SCP that he's always with,"

"B-b-ad b-b-boy Hhhhalo?"

Zak froze, "What?"

Dream shook its head. Zak sighed, continuing. "I think its changing him."

When the SCP did nothing, Zak started again.

"I saw that you can read minds, I need you to see if he's ok in the head."

Dream nodded, *"Always hhhhhhhelp f-friend."*

George almost hissed at Dream to stop, but it was too late. The absentminded SCP had begun morphing, returning to human form. And in the process, exposing Nick and George. But in the dark, they weren't sure if Zak had seen them or not.

"Davidson? Armstrong?"

He had.

"H-hi." Nick sighed, "Late night research, am I right?"

Zak shook his head, "N-no? And why does SCP-534 have a human form?"

George gesticulated frustratedly.

"He's a friend!" Dream smiled, flashing perfect teeth. George shivered.

"My friend, his name is—"

"I know."

Dream closed his eyes, leaning on George for support. *"H-he's scared."*

Zak wrapped his arms around himself.

"He doesn't know."

"Know what?"

Dream didn't elaborate, but opened his eyes. *"Couldn't stay there long."*

Zak's eyes widened, shining with tears threatening to be spilt.

"D-darryl's oh-kay," Dream said, walking over to Zak. *"He's oh-kay."*

Zak nodded. “T-thanks, 534.”

“Um... he has a name.” George said sheepishly, “It’s Dream.”

“Oh!” Zak smiled, “Cool. My name’s Skeppy.”

Dream smiled, “*Skeh-pee.*”

He patted Dream on the back in thanks, and turned to leave. “I— I can’t thank you enough. *Please*, don’t tell him I asked.”

“*Promise.*” Dream grinned.

As Zak left, Dream turned to look back at George. “*Doctor George needs sleep.*”

Nick nodded, “So what are you going to do?”

Dream nodded, “*I know, but don’t know how I know.*”

Nick took it at that, as Dream took George’s hand and led him to one of the walls, where he gestured for George to sit against the wall.

Were it not for the darkness, the red on George’s cheeks would have been quite incriminating.

“*Skehp-pe is changed?*” Dream asked, sitting besides George, back against the wall.

“Yeah,” Nick sighed, “He spent a little too long around an SCP. We humans can’t really be around you for a long period of time.”

Dream processed it for a moment, looking crestfallen. “*Oh.*”

“We’re good for now,” George reassured him, playing his hand comfortingly on Dream’s.

It was so easy to forget that it wasn’t Clay.

“*Worried for Sap,*” Dream frowned, “*You should save time.*”

“What do you mean, C— ...Dream?”

“*Ssap... leave. For safe.*”

“He’s right,” Nick sighed, “I should go.”

George nodded nervously.

Nick left to go get some sleep.

“*Just be oh-kay,*” Dream frowned, not finding the right words. “*Like... sleep?*”

“You mean relax,” George smiled. “Yeah.”

Dream nodded, and George leaned against the wall and closed his eyes. He felt Dream cozy up beside him, taking one of his arms in his.

“Doctor George relax?”

“Mhm.”

Dream entwined their fingers, clasping their hands together. George stopped himself from snapping his eyes open, instead electing to panic silently.

“Doctor George sleep.”

Somehow, some way, George fell into slumber almost immediately.

Dream smiled, looking down as George’s head slumped against his shoulder.

Something about the Dr. was familiar to Dream, something about him was sending up red flags in the back of his mind. Not *danger* flags, but something was off.

There was something about George that Dream knew.

How, he didn’t know. As with many things.

All he *did* know is that he had to keep them safe.

Events Log Seven

Skeppy entered the barracks he shared with Darryl, absentmindedly scratching at his stomach. *Damn diamonds*, he thought.

He went over to the sink, pouring a glass of water.

Hopefully the noise didn't wake Darryl, lord knew he needed sleep.

What had Dream meant, *BadBoyHalo*?

Halo was that damn SCP's name, maybe that had something to do with it.

The first time it had happened, that night in the bathroom, that was weeks ago. Before they transferred to Site-143.

It hadn't happened since.

Zak had his own theories as to *why*, but nothing concrete yet.

"Hello Skeppy."

"Mother fuck of a shit," Zak yelped, "Darryl, don't *do that!*"

But when he turned, his smile quickly disappeared. A glowing eye was staring back at him, a dark curved horn reaching up half a foot from his forehead.

"D-darryl?" Zak said, backing up against the counter. In the dim light, he could see the blackness grow a little larger, taking over much of his cheekbone and part of his nose.

"BadBoyHalo."

"Who the hell are you?" He hissed, "And what have you done with Darryl?"

"Zak?"

That was Darryl's voice.

Zak looked into Darryl's eyes, blank and abject fear in his eyes. Well, the one deep forest green eye he had left.

"What's happening to me?" He asked, voice cracking as he reached out towards Zak.

Pop!

"There. He's fine." BadBoyHalo droned, all the fear leeching from his emotions as he boredly examined his fingernails. *"Satisfied?"*

“Who are you?” Zak growled.

“I already told you,” He laughed, raspy voice sardonic. *“You see, you’re quite a pesky thorn in my side.”*

“How?” Zak questioned.

“His love for you...” Bad sighed, *“It’s quite overpowering.”*

Zak froze.

His *what?*

“Ah. I see you didn’t know,” He grinned wickedly, *“Poor Darryl, has it bad. Those diamonds of yours must really be enchanting...”*

“Shut up.” Zak spat, “Let him go.”

“And why would I do that?” Bad giggled ominously, *“You’re not the only one who loves him. I do too... but not in the same... context.”*

“Let him go.”

“Again, dear idiot, I have no reason to. I want him for my own, but every time you interfere he somehow just -gains- the strength to suppress me for a while.”

“I swear, I’ll find a way to get rid of you, Halo,”

“Not Halo anymore. I’m past that— I sacrificed that weak form in favor of this one.”

Pop!

“Z-ak...” Darryl whimpered, collapsing to the floor.

Zak caught the boy, in his arms, horrified tears unspilt in his eyes.

“W-what happened?” Darryl asked weakly, as Zak carried him to the couch.

“N-nothing,” Zak lied, “It’s... the *thing* happened again.”

“The thing?” Darryl frowned, but his eyes widened when he realized. “Oh.”

Zak nodded, kneeling beside the boy’s head.

And as selfish as it felt, Zak couldn’t stop thinking about something Bad had said.

His love for you is overpowering.

“I wanna sleep here tonight,” Darryl mumbled, “Don’t wanna get up.”

“Ok,” Zak smiled, running off to get blankets and pillows.

That night, Zak slept on the floor right beside Darryl. It was a little uncomfortable, but there was no place he'd rather be.

===== *The next morning*

Nick wandered into the office, eating a donut. His eyes flitted to Dream's unit...

In which George was still asleep, hand intertwined with Dream's as the slept on each other.

Shit.

Nick rushed into the unit, not even bothering to decontaminate.

"Get up!!!" Nick hissed, shaking George's shoulder. When he didn't stir, Nick went over to Dream.

"Dream!" Nick yelled, poking his cheek.

"*Ah!*" he yelped, startling awake.

"You gotta let him wake up," Nick explained urgently, "People are gonna see you two."

Dream's eyes widened, and let go of George's hand. He woke almost immediately.

"T-that was the first good sleep I've had in... weeks."

"*I help Doctor George!*" Dream smiled, nuzzling his cheek against the top of George's head.

George shot up from his sitting position, dusting himself off with a furious flush on the tips of his ears.

"I have to change," George smiled nervously, dashing off.

Nick was a little worried. Staying all night like that...

Those were Zak-level exposure times.

George, what have you gotten yourself into?

Nick saw Eret come around the corner, just as Dream was finished morphing back into the scary eight-foot man.

"*B-bye, Ssssap.*" It smiled. Nick nodded, and left.

Nick had a feeling that George had wanted to talk about something last night, but never got the chance.

Walking by all the Euclid and Keter-Class SCPs every day was getting a bit tiresome, their hating eyes bore into Nick's soul like drills.

A sense of Damocleian foreboding filled the atmosphere.

“Anything new with SCP-534?” Eret asked, rifling through a filing cabinet.

“Just teaching him some new words,” Nick lied. “How’s L’Manburg?”

“Good,” Eret smiled, “The new Thaumiel Hybrid is doing wonderfully.”

“Oh cool!” Nick grinned, “What kind of hybrid?”

“He’s called SCP T-Ec820,” Eret started, but Nick interrupted.

“That’s the big breakthrough guy!” Nick exclaimed, “The first pig-hybrid to not look like some sort of nightmare — and the first really successful Hybrid in general?”

“That’s him,” Eret said, “They’ve renamed him Techno.”

“Cool.” Nick nodded approvingly. “Wait, isn’t he the one that Dr. Anderson worked on right before he disappeared?”

“Yeah,” Eret smiled sadly, “The Foundation suffered a loss of a brilliant mind that day.”

“Mhm. And didn’t you work with him?”

“I did,” Eret frowned, “But Techno was his project. I was more with the volunteer program.”

The volunteer program.

There was something fishy going on with the volunteer program.

“I wonder what would make someone volunteer for that kind of thing,” Nick wondered aloud.

“I guess a whole number of things,” Eret said, “I mean, their memories are kinda erased.”

Nick nodded, having gotten almost all the information that he needed. “Yeah, that stuff’s really cool.”

Eret smiled, “Glad you think so! You and George should check out the lab sometime, when I transfer back. I could give you the whole tour!”

Nick plastered on a fake, unsuspecting grin, “That sounds awesome, dude.”

“Speaking of which,” Eret said, “The L’Manburg site is being re-absorbed into the whole D-Team Area.”

“Oh no!” Nick said, “What’s going to happen to the doctors there?”

“I thought you knew?” Eret raised an eyebrow. He took off his glasses to wipe off a smudge, and Nick looked away, kind of spooked.

“Knew what?” Nick inspected his shoelaces.

“That everyone’s transferring here,” Eret said. “Not just the doctors, but that Thaumiel Hybrid and two special SCPs. Your humanoid research is unparalleled, Dr. Armstrong, you’ll do great things with these two.”

“Why thank you,” Nick said, insanely suspicious. “We have two containment units to spare, just down that hallway.”

He pointed them out, and Eret smiled.

“Perfect.”

===== *Meanwhile at L’Manburg*

Niki hefted a box into her arms, balancing it on her hip.

“C’mon Will,” She sighed, “Site-143 is going to be great.”

“I know...” He exhaled, “I just love L’manburg a lot.”

Tommy pressed a hand to the glass of the containment unit.

“Hey!” Niki smiled, “I think they want to help us.”

“Well they can’t come out,” Fundy laughed.

“Why not?” Niki grinned, “Just for a little while.”

“You should know better than anyone, Dr. Chu, that no SCPs should ever be let out of their units unless Thaumiel designated.”

That was Techno’s voice, and they turned to see the pink-skinned Hybrid behind them. He was the same height as Wilbur (and that was saying a lot), and reasonably well built. Probably could deck any one of them in a fight.

Niki looked down glumly, remembering the previous year.

She’d been part of a containment breach at Site-84 last August, luckily she’d gotten inside of an airlock. It was the only reason she survived.

“B-but they’re borderline Safe class,” She laughed it off, “Tubbo wouldn’t hurt a fly. And I don’t think Tommy would, unless something happens to bee-boy.”

“Inexcusable.” Techno monotoned, *“All SCPs are to remain in their containment units, under punishable offense of Formal Report.”*

Niki sighed, downcast. “C’mon guys, we need to pack up.”

“I don’t get why the whole D-Team Area is just *moving in*,” Fundy added, stuffing his hands in his pockets.

“They’re going to turn L’Manburg into a Hub,” Will explained, “I guess L’Manburg is just in a good location.”

“Why? We’re literally in the middle of a forest.” Niki huffed, stacking a box on top of a little trolley SCP. It was Thaumiel, so it trundled away contentedly.

Niki would never get used to non-humanoid Thaumiels... they were kind of weird.

Not that the humanoid ones were any less weird.

“At least we can take Tommy and Tubbo,” Will said, placing his hand against the one pressed against the glass.

Fundy nodded, ears perking up. “Do we know anyone at Site-143?”

Wilbur nodded, “I know Doc Armstrong. He’s super chill.”

Niki frowned, “Isn’t Eret still there?”

They all remembered that fact at the same time.

“The SCPs aren’t going to like that...” Niki grumbled, returning to the task at hand.

===== ***Back at Site-143***

Nick walked into the office, carrying a stack of waffles, six high. It was about time he let Dream eat human food, instead of that horrid mush the SCPs had to eat.

He skipped decontamination.

Dream perked up instantly, sniffing the air.

“Hey Dream!” Nick smiled, “Try these, they’re called waffles!”

“*Wah-fulls!*” Dream shifted to human form, sitting on the floor.

He picked up a waffle and ripped it in two, devouring a whole half in one bite.

“Woah there,” Nick laughed, producing a fork from the folds of his lab coat. “Slow down, you’re gonna choke.”

Dream scowled, taking the fork, wrapping his hand around it like a caveman.

“Nonono,” Nick giggled, “Like *this*.”

“*P-pointless things,*” Dream shook his head, “*I eat with hands.*”

Before Nick could stop him, another half a waffle was gone.

“I’ll leave you to it,” Nick grinned, “Don’t make a mess.”

“Did I ever?” Dream responded with an evil grin.

“Mhm,” Nick raised an eyebrow, turning to walk back into the office space.

Leaving Dream with his thoughts.

Wah-fulls are very good.

Something... familiar? I know these food things.

A memory flashed before his eyes.

Clay woke with a quiet alarm, the phone only loud enough for Clay to hear, and not the sleeping George beside him.

Clay quickly pressed a kiss to George’s forehead, slipping out from under the sheets. He went to the kitchen, grabbing a box from the mini-fridge. Luckily, his barracks had doors between the rooms, so he could make his waffle-mix without fear of disturbing his boyfriend.

A little water like the box said, but he knew that the secret to good waffles was to half the water, and add that much milk. As well as a dash of brown sugar.

Humming happily as the mixture came together, he set the bowl to the side and reached up into the cabinets to find their waffle-maker.

That was how they’d met, waffles.

The memory was a haze, but it had ended up with George’s order of breakfast on Clay’s fresh shirt. Insisting on replacing the order, Clay and George had had breakfast together, in that little diner in eastern Kansas. Clay wasn’t even really going anywhere, a Sophomore double-major at the time in Programing and Biotech. He was thinking about dropping out, too.

George had offered him a job, something that was curious to Clay.

He’d said it was very scientifically based problem solving and research, a real hands-on job. Clay was curious immediately, as George wouldn’t tell him what company.

And a few days later, Clay was brought into the SCP Foundation as a student, completing a doctorate at the Foundation a little while later.

That was... years ago.

But since, Clay and George had vowed to eachother that they’d always keep a waffle-maker in their apartment or barracks, just to remind them of how much they loved eachother.

And now, Clay was making waffles again.

He set two on a plate, then made two more for when George woke up.

After munching his waffles, he scribbled a note and quietly stuck it to the pillow where his head would normally be.

It was testing day — whatever that meant.

Dream's memory ended with that, leaving him very confused.

Why did he remember George?

Why did they share a room?

And what did wah-fulls have to do with anything?

He chewed in silence.

Events Log Eight

===== *Two Days from now...*

This wasn't his friend that was staring at him right now. It was that thing. It was proven right when it smiles oddly at Zak. Letting out a tired sigh, he shakily asks.

"Do you plan on leaving him alone?"

A shake of the head.

"Is there.. is there anything that can make you leave him?"

It blinked, and seemed to be thinking of a reply. It smiled again, sickeningly sweet. Additionally, it slightly tilted his head, as if to mock him.

" If he dies. "

Zak grits his teeth and looks down. He thought that he would get that answer, but it still frustrated him nonetheless. He just wanted his... his Darryl back.

"Is there really no other way?"

" Do you really hate me that much? "

"I'm losing him to you, you selfish prick." Skeppy scowls. It only let out a chuckle, and tucked his hair behind his ear.

His friend was starting to look more unnatural the longer it lingered. Zak examined his features; his sclera was gray - close to being black. The smile he had showed his fangs, and they were becoming longer. The upper left side of his face was turning gray as well, and an odd bump on the left side of his forehead was growing, and Skeppy knows damn well it would be a horn soon.

Fucking hell.

"Skeppy?"

The familiar voice of his friend brought him back to reality, and Darryl was blinking rapidly, and looking at him with a confused face.

"What- What happened? My head hurts..."

He quickly holds Darryl to steady him, Zak could feel him shake. He brings him to a chair and sits him down, and swiftly gave him water.

“It talked to me again.”

Darryl widened his eyes and looked terrified. He looked down on the floor and asks, voice cracking, “What did it say?”

Knowing how scared Darryl was for his life, as much as it pained him, Zak lies.

“It was just asking when we could get out of here.”

===== ***The present, L’manburg...***

“Let’s go, guys!” Niki smiled, grabbing her suitcase and running towards the door to the outside world.

The trolley SCP was carrying SCP Containers, where the sedated Tommy lay on his back in one coffin-esque box with glass sides, and stacked on top of his was an identical box containing Tubbo.

She pushed open the latch, stepping into the sunlight and onto a paved path. L’manburg was buried deep in a forest, the fresh smell of pine in the undisturbed National Park air.

The sound of a helicopter greeted the doctors, as they wheeled their luggage down the path and towards a helipad.

“Where too, doc?” A blonde man asked, flashing a smile.

“Hey Phil,” She smiled, hopping into the front row seat and placing headphones over her ears. The trolley SCP wheeled into the cargo bay, and the door shut behind it. Wilbur, Techno, and Fundy clambered into the second row of seating, also getting ear protection. “Site-143, Denver International Airport?”

“That’s not too far,” Phil smiled, “Should take four hours, tops. Luckily we’re pretty close to the American border.”

Niki nodded, as the doors to the helicopter closed. “I’m gonna be glad to be back in the States.”

“Buckle in,” Phil grinned, “We’ll be there before you know it.”

And they were, a few hours later.

“Where’s the Site?” Will asked, as the containment units rolled out of the cargo bay and he jumped down onto the helipad.

“Downstairs,” A man with sunglasses said, and Niki realized it was Eret. “Didn’t you ever wonder what was under here? There’s so many conspiracies,”

“N-not really,” Niki smiled a little, “It’s just an airport.”

Eret frowned, the vibe was gone.

He led them into the huge complex of buildings, then to a mural. Its depiction was quite... macabre.

He seemed to search for something, then pushed his finger into the mural, on an inconspicuous bit of black paint.

"Fingerprint scanning..." A metallic voice said, *"Welcome, Administrator Eret."*

He smiled as the mural began to spin, it stopped after a half-rotation, revealing a hallway behind the painting that led to an elevator.

"Now *that's* cool," Fundy grinned. They followed him into the corridor, and the mural ground shut behind them.

On the elevator they stayed for quite some time, as Site-143 was buried *deep* underground.

"So, uh..." Will tried to make conversation, failing miserably.

"Mhm." Eret hummed back.

Ding!

Thank god.

"Welcome to the Site," Eret smiled, leading them through a sterile white hallway until they got to the larger office space.

"This place looks a lot nicer than L'Manburg..." Niki smiled.

"Well L'manburg was a repurposed army base," Eret monotoned, "This was special built."

"Hey!" Nick called, emerging from decontamination. "Welcome to your new home!"

Will walked over and took his outstretched hand. "Dr. Soot."

"Doc Armstrong, call me Nick." Nick replied, smiling. "This is Dr. Davidson," he pointed to George, who was walking in, "And *that* is SCP-534."

Unfortunately, Dream had forgotten the *don't show your human form* rule and was waving hello, blond hair and green eyes.

"What the *hell*—" Eret sputtered, "He can *do* that?"

He suddenly looked very worried indeed.

"Is that..." Wilbur looked over, "That's the doctor that went missing... Anderson!"

"What happened to him?!" Niki gasped.

"N-nothing," Eret stuttered, "That's SCP-534, he can shape-shift."

“Why does he look *exactly* like him?” Wilbur said.

“Yeah,” Nick added, crossing his arms. “Why is that?”

“Doctor Armstrong filed a report that detailed the SCP’s ability to read minds,” Eret spat back, taking off his glasses. “Dr. Davidson was a... close friend of Anderson, and as such I’m sure that the missing doctor must have been on his thoughts...”

Wilbur backed down a bit. “Davidson, is that true?”

“Might as well call me George,” He sighed frustratedly, “And yeah, it is.”

“It’s still freaky as hell,” Fundy frowned.

Eret turned his attention to Nick. “Has he ever done that before?” Nick’s eyes shifted, not staying one place.

“N-no. Never. I think I’d remember that,” He mumbled.

Zak and Darryl entered at that moment, awkwardly entering the scene at the moments of the most tension.

Zak scratched at his stomach anxiously.

“H-hey muffins,” Darryl smiled weakly. He looked tired again. He leaned on Zak, who wrapped an arm around Darryl’s waist protectively.

“I still don’t get how the hell—”

“Language!”

“—534 could take an image from George’s mind and *transfer* it,” Wilbur finished, “That’ll be fun to research.”

George sat back from the group, thinking to himself.

Why didn’t I know something was up immediately after he disappeared?

Why didn’t I try to find him?

I have to find him.

But Dream said...

No.

I won’t accept it.

I have to know what happened.

George wished that Clay was here to help him — he was always the best at logic puzzles, even if he did baby-rage at some of them.

The volunteer program.

There's conspiracy theories within conspiracy theories about that one.

What if...

No.

Surely not.

George had to keep himself from running off right then and there, rushing to go research and theorize and get to the bottom of Clay's disappearance.

I have to continue his work.

George tapped Nick on the shoulder anxiously. "Can we talk?"

"Sure!" Nick responded, hushed.

"Dr. Armstrong and I are going to do some testing on Dr— SCP-534's new human form," George announced, dragging Nick to the decontamination chamber.

After a hasty process, they spilled into Dream's unit.

"We need to find out what happened to Clay," George hissed, plastering a fake smile on as he realized that Eret was watching them. "I can't believe I waited this long."

George could still remember when Clay hadn't showed up to dinner that night, the icy-hot disappointment that settled in the back of his throat.

He could remember going to sleep alone, the room somehow seeming too cold despite all the blankets he piled on.

He could remember how it had felt, checking his phone every thirty seconds the next morning.

The waiting.

The wondering.

When he finally went to Site-19 security.

The loving messages from friends.

The second day of him being gone.

He hadn't eaten for two days.

The hunger was the least of his pain.

George pushed town tears again, looking over to see the expression he so wanted to make himself. A single bead of clear liquid rolled from Dream's eye.

"Doctor George," he whimpered, *"H-hurt... w-what am I feeling?"*

"Oh god he's crying," Nick cursed, using the hem of his coat to wipe Dream's face.

"T-that's called grief, Dream," George smiled sadly.

"Why are my eyes leaking?" Dream whispered, touching the tears with horrified fascination. *"L-looked into Doctor George's head... So much of the, the gree-f."*

"Don't read my mind for a little while," George said, "Just for your own good."

Dream nodded, shutting his eyes for a moment.

When he opened them, the tears stopped falling. There was still concern etched on his features.

"Dream, can you look at Eret's mind?" Nick asked.

"Bad man?" Dream shuddered. *"Don't want to."*

"Please?" George asked, trying his best to replicate the expression that always used to get Clay to do anything he asked.

"F-fine. For Doctor George." Dream mumbled, scratching at the back of his neck.

His eyes fluttered shut, contorting with thoughts that one couldn't really describe.

"So much anger," Dream whispered, *"H-he wants to h-hurt me,"*

His eyes flashed open.

"He kicked me out."

"He wants to *hurt* you?" Nick growled, "That little..."

"Hold on a second, Armstrong." George warned. "Are you *sure* he wanted to hurt you?"

Dream nodded, *"H-he was very angry to see... to see Clay."*

George froze.

Nick watched as a new figure walked into the office space, a pink-haired man wearing the SCP white clothes. A Thaumiel.

Dream turned to follow Nick's gaze, his eyes landing on Techno.

Another memory triggered.

“Ok Dave,” Clay frowned, “Are you sure you want to do this?”

Dave nodded, “Just turn me into something cool, ok?”

“You can still keep your memory,” Clay pleaded with his childhood rival, “Just don’t volunteer for this. Not this.”

“It’s ok,” Dave said, lying down on a hospital bed. “I’d rather forget some of the things that I’ve done.”

Clay nodded. Eret walked in, “Ready to start the Hybrid that will make history?”

Clay acknowledged him again, somewhat hesitantly. Eret hooked up the IV filled with neon pink liquid to the shunt in Dave’s arm, Dave watched with morbid fascination as the chemical entered his bloodstream. His eyes fluttered shut, never to open as Dave again.

“Welcome to the SCP Foundation, T-Ec820.” Eret smiled.

“Eret, I’m only here because I’m investigating the volunteer program.” Clay hissed, his hands shaking. “I... I can’t believe I actually did this. And to a friend!”

“It’s for science,” Eret smiled, “And plus, he said he wanted this.”

Clay nodded sharply, going for some coffee.

He just wanted George in that moment.

An hour later, and Clay’s phone buzzed.

Eret:

He’s ready!

I think this is the breakthrough

we’ve been waiting for.

Clay rushed to the ward, bursting through the door as Dave— No, not Dave— was sitting up, holding his head groggily. His hair had changed color to a dark pink, and his skin was rosy as well. His canines had grown, but only the lower ones. His ears were pointed and extended further, the fold at the top much larger than it should have been.

“You used the pig DNA.” Clay sighed.

“Hello, SCP T-Ec820,” Eret smiled.

“SCP?” Clay hissed, “He’s a Hybrid!”

“They won’t let him out of the ward if he’s not labeled as SCP,” Eret smiled, pointing to the ‘Thaumiel’ badge on his shirt.

Clay thought to himself, this is only until I can find out what’s happening.

This is just until I can find the truth.

I wouldn’t be doing it otherwise.

Right?

Dream snapped back to the present.

“George?” Dream said quietly, *“P-pink man. Was friend?”*

“Who is he talking about,” Nick asked.

George shrugged.

Dream pointed out the window to Techno.

“Pink man.”

Events Log Nine

“You mean Techno!” George smiled, “Is he a... a good man?”

Dream shook his head, “*Used to be. Don’t know now.*”

“You don’t know?” Nick raised an eyebrow.

“*Can’t read thoughts, like static.*”

“What do you mean, used to be?” George asked, “Do you know him?”

“*H-he’s not an Ess-Sea-Pee,*” Dream frowned, “*Seeing Tech-know made me... re-mem-buhr something?*”

“You had a memory,” Nick smiled, entirely genuinely. “Well don’t be shy, tell us!”

“*Name was Day-ve.*” Dream mumbled, “*C-clay, or m-me? W-was, was putting him on a b-bed,*”

George raised an eyebrow, “Was this in a hospital room?”

Dream nodded.

“Thank god,” Nick sighed, “For one horrid moment there I—”

“*Shhh*, SapNap,” George huffed, “Dream, continue.”

“*P-pink stuff went into his arm. I-I left, o-or Clay, or Clay left, I don’t know.*”

“You’re getting Clay’s memories,” Nick said in awe, “Is that even possible?”

George felt a budding hope at the back of his mind, one that could possibly be the making, or the ending, of his heart.

What if he never disappeared?

George pushed that thought deep down inside him, not getting too hopeful in case something happened.

Fractures only grow.

“Maybe he... can you try and find Clay again?” George asked urgently.

“*Can try...*” Dream nodded, concentrating hard.

His eyes flew open.

“*Nothing.*”

George slumped. But it also gave the budding flower of hope in his mind another root. Maybe...

"You said that your memories were Clay's memories," George whispered, almost too quiet to hear.

"You're not thinking—"

"N-no, not yet."

"But you're thinking—"

"Yes, Nick."

He closed his mouth.

"W-what do you mean?"

George ignored his question, "We need to see if anything else triggers a memory."

"Like pieces to a puzzle," Nick smiled, "The more memories he gets, the more we know about what happened."

George nodded. "Dream, have you gotten any other flashbacks?"

He shook his head, picking at the hem of his shirt.

"We'll have to find something that reminds of him of Clay," Nick suggested, "Like... I don't know. Do you think we could sneak him to your old barracks?"

"At Site-19? No way," George sighed. "I'll think of something."

George turned to walk away, "But we're doing this, right?"

Nick nodded, smiling determinedly. "We're finding Clay."

George went back through decontamination, but Nick stayed behind.

Dream shifted back into his eight-foot form. *"C-clothes. Itch."*

Nick laughed. "Can you shape shift into God?"

Dream simply stared down at Nick.

"O-ok," Nick giggled nervously, "A bit egotistical of you, but ok."

Dream grinned.

"What about the Devil?"

Just another simple stare.

The other doctors drifted out of sight, leaving the office space empty with no one to observe the containment unit. Nick grinned.

“I wonder...” Nick muttered, looking up at Dream’s fanged grin. “Could you shift into a biblically accurate angel?”

=====

George faintly heard a high-pitched scream echoing through the hall. *What the hell was that?*

He ran back towards the source of the unholy noise, jogging as fast as his short legs would take him. He and Sylvee got there at the same time, entering from opposite corners.

“What on earth happened?” She asked, looking into the containment unit.

Sapnap was curled up against the wall, fetal-style, with a quivering Blob Dream running around him in a distressed way.

“Is he ok?” George gasped, running through the airlock. “*Nick!*”

Dream shifted to his human form, taking George by the shoulders. “*Didn’t mean to scare him...*”

George went over to Nick, who was muttering something about having seen something he shouldn’t have.

“What did you do?” George hissed at his labmate.

“He asked me to be a bib-lick-uh-lly ack-your-ate ain-gel.”

“Nick you absolute idiot,” George sighed, helping him upright.

Nick nodded.

Dream looked concerned, “*Going to be alright?*”

Nick grinned weakly, “I’ll psychologically block it someday.”

Dream nodded, still a little confused.

George opened his mouth as if to speak, but shut it again. Then he said, “Y’know, we haven’t actually done any *testing* on Dream.”

Nick looked up, “Like MRI stuff?”

“We don’t even know if he has blood,” George shrugged, “We could do some sampling. DNA tests, stuff like that.”

“Yo, I bet his DNA is ratchet,” Nick grinned, already recovered from his theological horror.

George raised an eyebrow, “In spite of all your colloquialisms, I agree.”

“Um...” Nick said up at Dream, “Are you going to be ok with that?”

Dream looked at him quizzically. “*With what?*”

In response, Nick stood, “We can take the lab exit.”

Each containment unit had a back door, a super-secure hatch that led to a system of hallways that contained labs, for testing and stuff.

Nick ran over to the door, turning the wheel-latch as it creaked and groaned with disuse. Red-lit hallways greeted the three, as they ushered Dream down and into a room. The ward was simply outfitted, with one of those chair-bed-things that had the paper over it. Dream plopped down happily on it, as George put on a pair of latex gloves. Nick closed the door behind them.

Dream’s memory tickled at the back of his mind, something about the room made him want to run as fast and as far as possible.

But this was for Doctor George, so he stayed.

“You ok with needles?” George asked, bringing out a hypodermic needle.

Dream cringed away from the instrument, putting his hand up as to protect himself from it. “*H-hurt.*”

“It doesn’t hurt that bad,” Nick shook his head, “You won’t even notice.”

Dream shook his head, “*B-bad man hurt, use nee-duls.*”

George shot a look at Nick, *what had happened before he got here?*

“How do you know what these feel like?” George asked gently, putting down the needle. Dream relaxed visibly.

“*T-they did things,*” Dream whispered, “*Before I met SssapNap and Doctor George. W-woke up... bright lights...*”

“What on earth is he talking about?” Nick said, “Dream’s freaking light averse, that would seriously suck—”

“That can’t be right. The Foundation Code says we can’t purposely do that to an SCP.” George muttered, “What else did they do?”

“*T-they...*” He sniffed, holding his head. Nick walked over and laid an arm around his shoulders, rubbing his arm comfortingly. “*H-hurt me...*”

“I’m so sorry, but we need to know,” George sighed, “But what did they do?”

“*Nee-dles, lots of nee-dles,*” Dream gulped, “*S-so much light, burns...*”

George dimmed the lights a little, Dream's shoulders came down from his ears a bit.

"*B-bad man said to h-hurt me, here,*" Dream pointed to his stomach, a little to the left of his belly button.

"Can I look?" George said gently, and when Dream nodded, he gingerly took the hem of the SCP's shirt in his hands and lifted it. Right where had pointed, there was a mangled scar, two inches in length and a centimeter or two in width.

A knife wound.

"What in the ever-loving—" Nick gasped, "They must have been testing if you had a heal factor."

Dream nodded weakly, "*I was oh-kay after... a few how-urs?*"

"Did they do that in your, uh, tall form?"

Dream shook his head, "*Looked like Clay.*"

But that meant he knew about Clay before he read George's thoughts.

That, however, only occurred to Nick.

"George, hold up," Nick said, grabbing his arm, "If he looked like Clay when the *bad men* were... *experimenting* on him, that means that he could replicate his appearance before we knew him."

"Oh my god." George clapped a hand to his mouth. "We need a DNA test."

Nick nodded, "Dream, I am *so sorry*, but you're with us now. You're safe."

Dream smiled and offered up his arm, "*L-love S-sap. Love George.*"

"I love you too, you weird little SCP," Nick grinned. "George, you're not going to say it?"

George only smiled softly, picking up the needle again. Dream tensed.

"Hey, its ok," George said quietly, he held Dream's hand in one and the needle in the other. He rubbed his thumb over Dream's palm in an attempt to calm him down. "If you tense up, it'll hurt more."

Dream nodded, relaxing.

He really did look so much like Clay. Even when George had seen the scar, his eyes had flitted over the torso he'd seen so often, every detail etched into his memory. George found a vein immediately, thank the stars, and red blood started flowing into a vial. Dream had his eyes screwed shut.

A swirl of neon green showed in the vial, not mixing with the blood, but shifting around in it, settling near the bottom.

Nick's eyes widened, and George slid the needle out of his vein immediately. The small hole healed over instantly.

Dream opened his eyes, and saw the vial.

He remembered where he'd seen that liquid before.

He remembered why the room made him want to run.

He remembered everything.

He remembered who he was.

Events Log Ten

“They took Dream back for testing,” Sylvee said, not even bothering to let Eret ask. There was something *off* about that man. She, Will, and Eret were the only ones in the office. Fundy and Niki had taken Techno to train with a sword.

“We need to get these two in their containment unit,” Will said.

“I’ll take care of it,” Eret smiled.

“No offense,” Wilbur sighed, “But they don’t like you.”

Eret grinned, walking over to the taller doctor. He whispered something, and Wilbur’s eyes went wide.

“I— I’ll leave you to it. C’mon Sylvee,” Will said.

Sylvee narrowed her eyes. *What would make Wilbur react like that?*

As soon as they left, Eret brought the first container, Tubbo’s, to one of the empty containment units. They lined both sides of the halls, and the other empty one was directly across from this one.

He left Tubbo’s container inside the unit, sealing the airlock behind him and sealing him in alone.

Moving on to the unit across the hall, Tommy was unloaded. Eret brought out the little device that controlled the little boxes, they were cryogenic chambers. The blue button closed and turned on the machine, while the green button woke them up and opened the units.

He hit the green button.

He watched, as Tubbo woke up first, stepping gingerly out of his unit. He looked around wildly, trying to find Tommy. He was waking up as well, startling awake in a flurry. He wheeled around, spotting Tubbo. He let out an anguished yell, throwing himself against the glass.

“*T-t-t-tommy?*” Tubbo did the same, palms pressed against the unit as if he was trying to push through it.

It was the first time he’d spoken.

Eret smiled, he’d never gotten to experiment with *emotional* pain in a Hybrid before.

(Yeah, you read that right, a Hybrid.)

Eret had not only been on the team that “captured” Dream in the everglades, but he had also “found” Tommy and Tubbo.

I guess they really found him.

They'd been dependent on each other as humans, too. British schoolboys, desperate to get away from their lives.

Eret had *helped* them. Hadn't he?

He brought out a notepad, noting down their reactions. Tommy looked up, noticing Eret at last.

But instead of shrinking back, Tommy came closer to Eret, thorns pushing through his vines. With one finger, he drew a finger across his throat.

Eret noted it down.

Tommy went back to pounding on the glass, then hitting it with his vines, making a powerful whip with it.

Unfortunately, nothing could break that glass. Not even love.

"You two are truly something special," Eret murmured, locking eyes with a terrified Tubbo, walking towards him. He scampered backwards, eyes wide in fear.

He remembered everything that happened before L'Manburg.

Eret sighed, growing bored.

Anguish, grief, anger, the usual with separation anxiety.

He'd have to do something else to elicit a reaction.

He entered the airlock to Tubbo's unit, producing a vial of black liquid. Its scientific name was way too complicated to pronounce, but colloquially it was called *Wither*.

And out of another pocket, an invention he'd come up with himself. A sort of hyper-spray, a new way of injection that didn't involve needles. The nozzle just had to be pushed against the victim—he meant *patient's* vein, and the substance would be administered.

He walked towards Tubbo, who knew that vial all too well.

The bangs from Tommy's unit grew louder, enraged shouts and cries that signified the very end of his wits.

"Come here," Eret smiled, as Tubbo tripped over his heels and fell backwards, scrambling away on all fours. Soon enough, he was cornered, and Eret lunged forward with the hyper-spray—

Thud!

Eret fell to the ground, knocked out cold.

There stood Sylvee, a slightly bloody laptop computer in her hands. She set it down on the ground, and knelt by Tubbo. He lurched forward, hugging her desperately.

“Let’s get you back to your friend,” She smiled, leading him by the wrist through the airlock and into Tommy’s unit.

“*T-t-tommy!*” Tubbo cried happily, collapsing into Tommy’s arms. Vines quickly shot out from his arms, supporting and holding up the bee-boy. He had tear tracks down his cheeks.

Sylvee stood off to the side. Tommy looked at her, and smiled. She left and grabbed Eret’s body from the other unit, dragging him unceremoniously through the hall by his foot.

“We heard a yell—” Wilbur rushed into the office just as Sylvee entered, “Oh my god, she’s murdered Eret.”

Niki, who was behind him, shrugged, “Are we going to say anything?”

Will shook his head slightly, “That guy was *sus*.”

“I didn’t kill anyone,” Sylvee sighed, “He was... doing something to the SCPs.”

“What?”

“He put Tommy and Tubbo in separate units,” She said, seeing the look of outrage on Wilbur and Niki’s faces. “He was going to inject Tubbo with *this*,”

She held out the hyper-spray for Wilbur to inspect.

“This is Wither,” Wilbur said, disgusted. “Only the espionage or max-security prison units have this stuff. It’s... a torture device.”

“*What?*” Niki shouted, racing off towards Tommy and Tubbo’s unit.

Sylvee muttered something to herself.

“So you just... hit him?”

“With my laptop,” She monotoned. “No one hurts the SCPs. It’s against the Code of Ethics.”

“Cool.” Wilbur smiled, “Remind me to uh, not make you angry.”

She smiled, adjusting her glasses. “I just *knew* he was up to something,”

“But I wonder *why*.” Wilbur said. “I bet we could find out.”

Sylvee nodded.

Events Log Eleven

Darryl didn't leave the barracks that day after he and Zak came back from that... awkward exchange. He was too scared... of himself.

Darryl dear...

What do you want?

Isn't it enough that you've made me isolate from my own friends?

Um... No?

I have a proposition for you.

What..?

We both know that I'll win eventually.

You grow tired, Darryl.

...

Give up now, and I'll spare his life.

Who's?

You know full well.

I-I'll keep fighting you!

You can't take over completely, not when Skeppy helps me.

Dear, you've shut him out.

You're locked in the bathroom.

He's outside on the couch, crying.

What?

No!

Doesn't that feel just awful?

Knowing you've caused his pain?

Doesn't that just... eat you up?

Stop talking to me.

Halo, I used to love you so much.

And yet you hate me.

I'm you, Darryl.

And therefore, you hate me.

I— I don't hate myself.

We both know that's a lie.

And maybe it's deserved.

SHUT UP!

Zak loves me!

That's all that I need!

And so you admit it, the diamond boy has fallen.

And for -you-.

P-please stop.

You're so weak.

This is too easy.

I might be weak, but he's not.

He can get me out of this.

A completely misplaced confidence.

I WILL win.

So do you take the deal, or not?

I—

Deal?

Or do I get to kill him too?

N-no! You can't take him away from me.

Not like this.

...Fine.

Hm?

You have a deal.

“Darryl come out of there,” Zak pleaded, knocking on the door miserably. “*Please*. I need you, buddy.”

Buddy. Darryl thought glumly.

I’m a merciful demon.

Make your goodbyes.

...

...you’ll see him again.

T-thank you, I guess.

Darryl checked the mirror — he didn’t look *monstrous*.

The lock clicked out of place and Darryl opened the door. Zak was leaning against the doorframe, eyes a little puffy.

“Oh muffin,” Darryl mumbled, wrapping his arms around Zak’s waist and melting into him.

Zak went stiff for a moment before returning the favor. He balled his fists in Darryl’s black hoodie, burying his head in the boy’s shoulder.

“What’s wrong?” Darryl murmured.

“I just miss you,” Zak whispered, “Y-you’ve been so distant lately, I—”

“I’m fine,” Darryl said, a little harsher than he’d intended.

Your goodbyes, Darryl.

Darryl’s brows furrowed and he held Zak a little tighter to him.

“I—” Darryl’s voice broke.

Now or never.

If Halo somehow... kills me, could I die knowing I never told him?

“Hm?” Zak hummed, not taking his face away from Darryl’s shoulder.

“I love you.” Darryl stuttered, positive that his heartbeat was louder than his words.

“Well I love you too,” Zak smiled quizzically, leaning back to look at Darryl but not taking his hands from where they were clasped around Darryl’s waist.

“N-no...” Darryl muttered, “Like... *love* you.”

Well this is entertaining.

Can you just shut your... mouth... for two minutes?

Two.

Darryl frowned at his inner conversation.

Zak was bright red, rose dusting his cheeks and flamed at the tips of his ears.

Darryl felt a ringing in his left ear, he knew why and the knowledge gripped his heart with icy claws — an odd juxtaposition to the nervous warmth Zak had just instilled.

“I, uh...” Zak said, grinning sheepishly.

“It’s ok,” Darryl’s face fell, “I get it. I wouldn’t like me either.”

He moved to step away.

Zak’s hands didn’t go anywhere, refusing to release their prisoner.

“Zak, wha—”

“I *love* you.” Zak smiled, “*I love you I love you I love you.*”

Darryl’s heart felt like imploding, like in a star’s dying moments before supernova. Big enough star, and you’d get a gorgeous nebula after its death.

Big enough heart, and something beautiful would happen as well.

Darryl returned his arms around Zak’s waist again, resting his forehead against Zak’s shoulder. “You mean it?”

“Of course I do,” Zak giggled, “Muffin, I wouldn’t trade you for anything.”

One minute left.

Darryl let out a choked sob, his hands on Zak’s back going from a gentle hold to a desperate grasp, the sharp edges of diamonds cutting through Zak’s shirt and into Darryl’s skin. He didn’t care.

“Oh my stars,” Zak gasped, leaning back, “Are you ok? Did I do something?”

Darryl smiled sadly, shaking his head. “You don’t know how long I’ve waited for that.”

“You should have told me sooner,” the corner of Zak’s mouth twitched upwards as he brought his hand to Darryl’s cheek, wiping away some of the tears.

The ringing in his left ear got a little worse.

Final moments, Darryl.

Just a little longer?

...Fine. This is the only entertainment I’ve had in millennia.

“I know...” Darryl sniffed, smiling at his friend.

Not just a friend anymore, huh?

“Look, I don’t have much time,” Darryl said, Zak’s brows furrowed.

“W-what do you mean?” He said, “You dying or something?”

“In a manner, I guess.”

And now you’ve spilled the beans.

Oh well, your choice.

Darryl’s vision in his left eye started to fizz, little pops of static crossing his eye.

“Oh *shit* it’s happening again,” Zak cursed.

“L-language,” Darryl laughed weakly. “I— I did it for you.”

“Did *what*?” Zak hissed, bringing both hands to his cheeks.

Darryl couldn’t answer the question. Not yet.

Quickly, before he could say anything else, Darryl pressed his lips against Zak’s.

He felt a hand in his hair, pulling him tighter against the other. Darryl’s back found the doorframe, he was pressed gently against the wall.

The kiss was bittersweet, tinged with the Darryl’s knowledge and both of their finally connected hearts.

And there, then, a nova occurred, the human capacity for emotion completely maxed out to the point of bursting.

That was the moment their nebula bloomed, a vast expanse of stars and color and potential for new beginnings, new stars, new adventures.

And then the moment was over, and the nebula was just space dust.

They separated, Zak's forearm resting on the wall by Darryl's head. He rested his forehead against the other boy.

"I did it to protect you," Darryl sniffed, tears spilling from his eyes again. "H-he's getting stronger, Zak..."

"Darryl, *what did you do?*"

"He promised that he wouldn't hurt you."

"If?!"

"If..." Darryl swallowed the lump in his throat, "If I gave in."

His hand went to his forehead, where he could feel the lump growing. He couldn't see out of his left eye or hear from his left ear.

"You didn't."

"I did."

Zak ran his hands through his hair, backing away from the boy pressed against the wall. "N-no, not for me,"

"Yes for you," Darryl smiled weakly, "I already told you why."

Zak walked back over, rooting his hand in Darryl's hair again. "How long do you have left?"

No time, actually.

Been nice watching this little... interaction.

C'est la vie, n'est pas?

"H-he says that it's time."

"No!" Zak hissed, pressing his lips against Darryl's once again.

Pop!

Zak scrambled away, as two black horns grew from his friend's skull. He watched as the black grew, taking over his whole face. Both eyes were white, and glowed. Halo pulled his hood up, the red trim completing the demonic look. His hands were black, and now they were clawed.

This wasn't Darryl anymore.

Events Log Twelve

As George slid the needle out, he looked up at Dream. The SCP was looking at the vial with a bewildered expression. Dream gazed at the neon green swirling in the crimson sea, his face scrunched up in confusion.

Suddenly, his eyes widened, Dream's face showed shock, pure, utter shock. Without a word, he leapt from the chair and stormed out the door.

"Dream!" Nick called out, "Where are you going?!" he asked, rushing after the blonde, George following suit close behind.

They followed him down the dimly lit hallways uncomprehendingly. Dream swerved around a corner, running into Wilbur, Niki, and Sylvee, who had a slightly out-of-it Eret on their hands, like he'd just woken up or something.

Dream, undeterred, forged ahead. And without a word he picked up Eret by the collar of his shirt and shook him, slamming him against the wall. Wilbur and Sylvee cried out and leapt back in alarm.

"What the *fuck* did you *do to me*?!" Dream growled, his voice still resonant and rough mode but his words were clear — and full of malice.

"Dream? What do you mean?" George asked, breaking the silence.

The SCP turned around and faced George, a slight smile flitted through his expression of anger and the terrified mewling of the injured doctor.

"Hey, Georgie."

That wasn't the voice of an SCP.

George could've staggered backwards at the yes of the nickname, he could've collapsed, were he not rooted to the spot in shock.

"C... Clay?"

Dream— *or Clay*— smiled wider, "Yeah, I think so."

He turned back to Eret, smile still plastered on but with a different tone — a maniacal grin that wasn't comforting in the least.

"Eret, what did you do?" Clay asked, pressing a forearm on his throat.

Eret choked out a laugh. "You knew too much."

The rest of the doctors began to catch on, creating context as best they could.

“*Knew too much?* We were in it together!” Clay exclaimed, and Eret flinched as his grip got tighter.

“Oh dear, dear Dr Anderson...” Eret smiled. “Do you know nothing?”

“I know a lot more than I did,” Clay retorted, “I have all my memory back. Turns out that little machine of yours isn’t permanent.”

“Ah shit,” Eret replied, the smirk not leaving his face. *What did he know that everyone else didn’t?*

“*Language,*” came a voice from the shadows. George looked over, there was a shadow cutting across his face, the only bits of him visible were ripped black jeans and a black hoodie with red trim.

“Darryl?” Nick smiled, “Oh thank god you’re ok—”

He was cut off when the boy emerged into the light, opening his glowing eyes. His horns added a half foot to Darryl’s already impressive height of 6’4”.

“D-darryl?” Nick stammered, as not-Darryl grinned maliciously.

“*Step away from the good doctor,*” Halo smiled, “*And no one gets hurt.*”

Clay snarled, white claws forming on his fingertips, pressing into Eret’s neck.

Halo sighed, “*Fine. I didn’t want to do this.*”

“Do what?” Nick growled, taking a step towards the SCP.

“*That’s the thing about Thaumiels,*” Halo laughed, “*They’re so... forgettable.*”

No one realized he wasn’t talking about himself until it was too late.

Eret started giggling, insane laughter that crept up like a glacier around George’s heart. Eret’s glasses fell to the floor and shattered.

“You guys are *so* screwed,” He grinned wildly.

Clay, uneasy, shifted his gaze from Halo to Eret to Halo again.

“*Ok...*” Halo said, directing his voice somewhere *other* than the doctors, “*NOW!*”

The lights shut off, sirens and alarms blaring painfully.

The only light came from Eret’s and Halo’s eyes. Both eyes closed, and Clay stumbled forward.

Red backup lights flared to life, revealing Halo and Eret’s disappearance.

“Where the hell did they go?” George shouted.

“Guys,” Niki hissed, her voice terror-drenched, “We need to hide. *Now.*”

“What’s going on?” Clay said, wheeling around to stare down the dark hallway.

“Warning Researchers: Containment Failure.”

“Containment breach!” Wilbur exclaimed, “Where’s the safest place in the building?”

“Dream’s containment unit,” George responded immediately, “It was designed for researching Apollyon-Class SCPs.”

“Then let’s *go!*” Niki shouted, running back towards the way they’d came.

“Wait!” Will hissed, “We have to get Tommy and Tubbo!”

Clay nodded, “Let’s go.”

Wilbur rushed down the hall, quickly reading the numbers on each door as sirens blared.

“Here!” He said, unscrewing the hatch. They rushed into the unit, not only seeing the two SCPs but a third, one that Nick recognized as a particularly mean (and dangerous) Keter-Class humanoid. It had broken in through the airlock with its deadly-sharp blades, which stood in place of hands.

Tommy was trying to defend himself, lashing out with vines as he threw himself between Tubbo and the Keter, but the SCP kept catching his vines and slicing them off painfully.

Tommy wouldn’t last much longer.

Clay let out a shout, jumping into the battle. George watched as he moved faster than should be physically possible, lunging at the oxblood-red Keter and knocking it to the floor.

Clay sunk his clawed hand into the much larger Keter’s side, it cried out in outrage. The SCP tried to throw him off, landing harsh blows, but Clay wouldn’t budge.

Tommy stood up shakily, leaning on Tubbo. He shot out a vine from his wrist, snaking it around the Keter’s ankles.

“*D-dre-am,*” Tommy shouted, struggling to get the words out, “*L-let g-g-go!*”

Clay did as told, releasing his bloody grip on the Keter and dropped deftly to the ground, slashing at the arms that tried to swipe at him.

George hadn’t ever seen Clay *or Dream* fight before, the instincts of the SCP inside him and his calculating scientist’s mind working together was a wondrous thing to behold.

The Keter stood, towering over Tommy and Clay.

“*P-p-unch!*” Tommy yelled, Tubbo hugged onto Tommy’s waist as he used the last bits of his strength to yank on the vines around the Keter’s ankles, Clay jumped and landed a vicious

throw right into the Keter's face.

The Keter toppled backwards, landing with a hard *thunk*.

It was dazed.

Tommy collapsed, smiling softly as the vines retreated back into his skin.

Sylvee dashed forward, holding Eret's forgotten hyper-spray. She tossed it to Clay, who pressed it against the Keter's neck.

It shrieked in pain, spasming wildly.

"Run!" Clay shouted, picking up Tommy bridal-style and running towards the door. Niki helped Tubbo to his feet and followed close behind.

Wilbur closed the hatch behind them, locking it tight.

George didn't have time to process what was going on— he'd do that once everyone was safe.

"This way!" He called, rushing forward to take the lead.

They stopped at Hatch 534, labelled after the SCP it housed.

Nick helped open it with a creak, and they dashed through.

There was someone, or *something*, waiting for them.

Lower fangs flashed brilliant white in the red light.

A blue sword's gleam pierced the dimness.

"Been a while since I've seen ya, Anderson."

"Dave?" Clay stuttered, "What did they *do* to you?"

"Haven't you heard?" The Thaumiel laughed, *"It's Technoblade now."*

Clay tensed, crouching into a fighting stance, ready to spring.

"Georgie," Clay whispered behind him, "Take everyone and *run*."

"I can't leave you—" George hissed, walking in front of Clay to look him in the eyes, "Not after I just found you."

"And I can't lose you," Clay replied, "Just *go*!"

George's eyes burned dangerously, and he nodded, "Just... be ok?"

Clay nodded, standing to his full height and squeezing George against him desperately, “Promise.”

“Ugh. Too sentimental for my taste,” Techno picked at his sword’s edge, *“Can we just fight now?”*

Clay growled, “You’re gonna regret this.”

Zzt!

Sylvee and Niki fell to the floor.

Zzt!

Tommy and Tubbo collapsed on each other.

Zzt!

Wilbur and Nick.

Zzt!

George and Clay.

“I don’t think he will,” Eret said, emerging from Halo’s concealing shadow.

The two held a sort of blowgun in their hands.

And sticking out of the neck of the eight doctors and SCPs, a feathered dart was stuck.

“Let’s get ‘em back to HQ,” Eret growled, all the smugness leaving his demeanor. “Where’s the diamond one?”

“Stowed somewhere safe,” Halo winked, *“I promised the host, Darryl, he wouldn’t be killed if he gave in.”*

“Good thinking,” Eret mumbled, “But where is he?”

“In a cell at HQ,” Halo deadpanned, *“I said killed, not imprisoned.”*

Techno scoffed, *“You’re diabolic, ya know that?”*

Halo did a mock bow, tipping an invisible top hat.

Techno slung Clay over one shoulder, walking off towards the airlock.

The little trolley Thaumiel trundled in, carrying three of the cryogenic chambers.

Poor thing, had no idea what it was helping.

Eret and Halo loaded Tommy, Tubbo, and George into the three chambers, the rest were carried by Halo via the use of some kind of dark magic.

“Thaumiels really *are* invisible,” Eret remarked, leading the trolley SCP out of the airlock and down the corridor, “Techno, you were gone for so long and yet they never questioned where you were.”

They boarded the elevator.

Techno shrugged, “*Let’s just get these nerds to the Insurgency.*”

Eret nodded, placing his finger on the keypad.

“*Welcome, Administrator Eret.*”

“*Administrator, huh?*” Halo smirked, “*Just how high-level are you?*”

“Quite,” Eret simply said, the mural spun open. They made their way through the deserted airport, taking an escalator down to the tarmac. There, two large black SUVs with completely tinted windows waited, two burly men in suits stood stoically by.

“May intermittent vengeance arm his right hand,” Eret said, quoting the motto.

“To plague us once again,” The first man in a suit said, opening the back seat of the SUV for him.

The trolley loaded the cryogenic chambers into the other SUV, which had a much larger trunk area. The four non-contained doctors were given paralysis hyper-sprays, and unceremoniously piled into the back of the first trunk.

Eret and Halo went with the paralyzed doctors, while Techno took Clay to the second SUV.

“To Cheyenne Mountain,” Eret grinned, “And to new science.”

The two black cars drove off into the sticky Colorado summer’s night.

Events Log Thirteen

When Clay woke there was a violent ringing in his head. He stretched, every muscle and tendon stiff.

There was little to no light in the room. Clay sat blinking wildly until his emerald eyes adjusted to the darkness.

Dream had been a creature of the dark, so Clay was now too.

His eyes flitted over a few forms that were stirring gently, waking from whatever had knocked them out.

“*Ugh*,” Nick’s voice sounded, “What kind of *bull-shittery* is this...”

“Is everyone ok?” A woman’s voice, it was Sylvee.

“I’m alright,” Niki said.

“Banged up but ok,” Nick grumbled.

“Let’s get some light in here,” someone said, it sounded like Wilbur.

Clay screwed his eyes shut, trying to think of a way to generate.

Dream’s eyes, they glowed.

He started to shift, and opened his eyes again when he was in his eight-foot form.

A soft green light spilled into the room, just enough to see where everyone was.

Five doctors on the floor slowly waking, and three clear coffin-shaped boxes in the corner. Dream’s eyes landed on one in particular, the only one that held a human instead of an SCP.

And one doctor that they’d completely forgotten about, slumped against the wall.

“Fundy?” Niki whispered, horrified.

The unmistakable ears and tail were outlined in the glow. Dream hurriedly made his way to the doctor, rolling him over to see if he was alright.

No blood — that was good.

He listened for a heartbeat, it was there and strong.

“*H-he’s ok*,” Dream said, “*J-just sleeping*.”

Wilbur half-dragged him over to where he and Niki were sitting, and propped him up between so that he could lean on either of their shoulders.

Dream scooted closer to the box, using clawed hands to pry the lid open. A puff of chilled air spilled into the room, then George started coughing lightly, sitting up in the box. Dream shifted back to Clay, and threw his arms around George.

“I missed you so much,” He whispered softly.

George seized up for a moment before returning the favor in the pitch black of the room. “You’ve gotten stronger,” he remarked, “I can’t really breathe.”

“Oh sorry,” Clay murmured into George’s hair, loosening his grip a little.

“We need to get Tommy and Tubbo out,” Niki said.

Clay nodded, fumbling in the darkness for the other two lids. He found one, digging his nails under the lip of the lid and hefting with all his strength (which was quite a lot).

Another puff of cold air, and the buzzing of some very sleepy bees could be heard. That had been Tubbo’s box.

“Hey,” Clay murmured, helping the bee boy to sit, “You’re ok, you’re safe.”

He couldn’t see if Tubbo was ok or not, the lack of light was starting to really be a problem.

Clay wondered if he could incorporate some of Dream’s traits with his own, like how he had with the claws.

He blinked a couple times, localizing the feeling of morphing behind his eyes.

Blink.

Blink.

A slight lime light dusted over the room — it’d worked.

Tubbo was frowning and hugging himself around the arms, staring down at the sleeping Tommy.

Clay pried open his box, pulling him upright.

Tommy immediately started looking around, sighing with relief when he spotted his friend.

“We need to get their memories back,” Clay said, “No one deserves to live like that.”

“Except for Eret,” Sylvee muttered.

By the light of Clay’s eyes, they manage to stack all the cryogenic boxes in the corner of the room. They appeared to be in some sort of large cell, made of black iron and completely

smooth on all walls. There was a big door, and Clay had found a sort of sliding hatch that opened from the outside, about eye-level.

There was enough room for everyone to sit against the wall comfortably. Clay went back to where he was before, sighing and stretching his legs as far out as they'd go.

He closed his eyes for a moment, his muddled mind sounding a bit like a fork in a garbage disposal.

He felt something warm on his chest.

Opening his eyes, their glow landed on fluffy brown hair and round sunglasses.

"Hey Georgie," He whispered. George had crawled over, laying with his back on Clay's chest.

"C-Clay..?" George said, like he had a question.

"Hm?"

"Could you... do the thing you did last night?"

"S-sure." Clay smiled, clasping his hands around George's stomach.

Oh, how they used to spend hours like this, just on the living room couch of their barracks, with George having a report or something on his lap, Clay'd occasionally fix his grammar or something. Mostly just letting his mind wander and enjoying the other doctor's presence.

There were days when Clay was the one with the report to write, and to George's chagrin he'd often use the boy's thighs as a desk.

Memories, shades of the past, filled Clay's head as he sat in the dark, trying to make George fall asleep.

A few moments of peace were all they got.

The iron door opened with a *screeeeeeeeech!*

The light blinded the doctors and SCPs, as a figure dressed in black with glowing eyes threw in a new prisoner.

There was a screeching sound on the stone as the new prisoner slid across the floor a little ways.

"Halo wait—" Nick shouted, but the door was closed swiftly and the room was plunged to ink.

"Who was it?" Niki asked, "Clay, do the thing."

He blinked a bit before his eyes projected their light.

There were steaks of blood on the floor, from where the new person had skidded.

Ouch.

“That’s...” Nick said, “*Ohmygod* that’s Zak!”

George disentangled himself from Clay’s lap, crawling over to Skeppy’s bleeding form. He was shirtless, and bleeding a *lot* from somewhere.

Gingerly George nudged him, Zak flinched at the touch and curled his knees to his chest.

“It’s ok, it’s us,” He said, as Zak shrunk back from his voice, backing up against the wall with terrified eyes.

“H-how do I know it’s not just *him in my head again*,” He hissed, “I’m not doing *anything* you want me to!”

“No it’s really us,” Nick said gently, making his way into Zak’s line of sight.

Zak reached out with a trembling hand, and Nick took it.

He slumped in relief, “You’re real.”

“Where is he bleeding from?” Clay asked, “Zak, where did they hurt you?”

“M-my back,” He mumbled, shifting around in his seat to show them.

Everyone gasped.

The line of diamonds up his back was still there, but there were bloody craters where some of the largest ones should have been.

“T-they cut them out of me,” He whispered, shaking.

“You’re going to bleed out at this rate,” Clay cursed, sacrificing his own shirt in favor of making it a bandage.

“Clay, you can heal my screwed up sleep schedule,” George wondered aloud, “Can you heal that?”

Clay thought really hard, trying to figure out how. “I can try.”

“J-just do it,” Zak mumbled.

He hissed in pain as Clay pressed a hand to the worst of the *removals*, trying to focus the... the kind of energy that let him help George with his sleep.

Slowly, surely, a new diamond began to form in the place where one had been ripped out. After a few moments, the diamond had stopped up the bleeding, and Zak slumped in relief.

That was when Clay noticed all his various other injuries...

Poor guy, he looked pretty beat up.

He had a purple bruise in the shape of a handprint around his throat, and there were spidery black veins shooting out from a point on his neck.

They'd Withered him.

There were also strange little marks all around his neck and chest, but Clay had no idea what they were.

Who ever had done this would pay.

"Who did this to you?" George asked gently.

"Halo is *not* Darryl," was all he said. "Darryl, he— he sacrificed himself, for me."

"What?" Nick exclaimed.

"Right before he uh... *turned*... Darryl told me that he— that he told Halo that he'd give in if he promised I wouldn't die."

Clay sighed in anger, moving his hand to the next rip in his flesh.

Wincing, he continued, "I guess Halo never said anything about hurting me."

"I swear I'm going to knock the lights out of that two-faced stupid-horned—"

"Nick you can't do that," George stopped him, "You'd only be hurting Darryl."

"Ok," Clay said, "That should be good for the diamonds."

"T-thank you," Zak mumbled.

"Did... anything else happen?" Wilbur asked.

Silence.

"...N-nothing I want to talk about." He whispered.

That was enough of a clue that they should stop pushing.

"Wha... what's goin' on..." Fundy started speaking groggily, hand to his head.

"Fundy!" Niki exclaimed, hugging him.

"H-hey, I—"

The door opened again. It was a man with a gold chain around his neck, although he looked young. He held a pistol in his hands. Shielding their eyes against the light, the prisoners could see Eret step around the corner.

“The rest of the Insurgency wants to see you,” He smirked, and Sylvee noticed with satisfaction that he had bandages wrapped around his head.

“On your feet,” The guy with the gun said.

“Enough, Punz,” Eret sighed, “Bad enough Quackity got a promotion, don’t make me listen to you too.”

Punz nodded.

“Single file,” Eret sighed, “Punz, if you would,”

As each doctor or SCP left the cell, Punz clapped on a handcuff that was linked to the next person’s, forming a sort of chain.

Bright light seared their eyes as they were led through the black-iron hall, the vaulted ceilings ribbed every so often with arches.

Eventually they got to what looked like a main control room, the same dusky metal made up the walls, floor, and ceiling. The room was in two floors, a main floor busy with hushed workers and a second story that overlooked the first, with various high-ranked-looking people manning control stations from within bulletproof glass. On one wall there was a gargantuan screen, fifteen feet in height and twenty in length, it showed a map of the world on it with various red dots of differing sizes dotted around the globe.

Some of them had the Insurgency symbol on them, some had the Foundation’s crest.

Clay took every one of those Insurgency dots into his formidable memory, in case he got back to the Foundation alive.

In case.

“Well who’s this,” A new guy said, a young blonde who didn’t look a day over sixteen.

“Agent Purpled, calm yourself,” Eret monotoned, “Get the Site Leaders down here, they’d be... interested.”

The young man dashed off, George watched as his face appeared on the protected second level, speaking to a man and woman in sharp suits. The woman had a lab coat on over her outfit, and had purple hair. The man had glasses and brown-black hair.

The three of them disappeared from view, and appeared on the first level a moment later.

“Well w’ot have we ‘ere,” the woman smirked, her voice was thick with an Irish accent. “That’s Head Administrator Illumina, I’m Chief Scientist Justaminx.”

“So *that’s* Dr Anderson,” Illumina grinned savagely, “The Foundation’s *golden boy*.”

Clay snorted, “Sounds like someone’s jealous. What, Foundation didn’t *value* your complete lack of morals?”

Illumina growled, “Don’t make me Wither those pretty features of yours.”

“Do it, no balls—” Clay snarled, but was cut off by a fist to the face.

Illumina shook his hand loose with a wince, taking a handkerchief out of his pocket to clean the blood off his knuckles. Clay staggered backwards, nose broken across the arch. He touched the blood carefully with a fingertip, grimacing.

George, next along the chain, moved a little to the left to stand protectively in front of Clay. The short doctor probably couldn’t have taken a blow like Clay just did and stayed conscious.

While this exchange was going on, Tommy was having an idea.

Maybe all those years of playing Skyrim lock-picking before he was Turned left some weird ancestral knowledge in his head. He slipped a thin vine into the mechanism of the cuffs, seizing up the catch and slipping it free. It was quiet, no one knew his hands were unlocked.

Minx sighed, “Which one first?”

Illumina grinned, “What about blondie-boy?”

Nick’s upper lip curled in a snarl, “Sounds a little weird-champ to me, Illumina.”

“Why don’t we stock gags,” Illumina exhaled, “Something tells me this is going to get very annoying, very quickly.”

“I say we give diamond boy a break,” Halo stepped out from the shadows, *“He’s... taken it well.”*

Halo walked up to Skeppy, roughly taking his chin in a dusky black hand. *“But I’m not done playing with this one yet.”*

There was true fear in Zak’s eyes.

“Keep your horned arse away from him,” Wilbur spat.

“Him,” Eret said suddenly, pointing straight at George.

“We use him first.”

Events Log Fourteen: Flickers

“Get your *fucking* hands off him!” Clay snarled, straining against his cuffs.

He’d forgotten that his shirt was still tied around Skeppy’s various wounds, exposing the litany of well-organized experimentation scars across his back. The ones that George hadn’t seen yet.

“*Language,*” Halo muttered.

“Doctor Manifold, if you would,” Illumina called, and a man with a headset appeared at his beck and call.

He unhooked George’s restraints from the chain, then linked Clay’s to Fundy’s, who was next down the line.

George was quietly stoic, not letting himself be rooted from the spot. For such a small person, he was remarkably steadfast.

Manifold yanked on the chain again, to no avail.

You fight ‘em, Clay thought proudly.

George simply stared straight at Illumina, his cold and shadowed eyes having the unique ability to pierce right into one’s soul.

Yank.

Nothing. He stayed right where he was.

“For heavens sake,” Illumina grumbled, “Manifold, Wither him.”

“A-are you sure?” The doctor said hesitantly, “That’s a little much—”

“Did I stutter?” he shouted.

Manifold jumped a little, bringing a hyper-spray and a black vial from a coat pocket. “*I’m so sorry,*” he whispered.

Right as he was about to press the device against George’s neck, Clay sprang into action, dropping down to sweep the legs out from Manifold. He tumbled to the ground, dropping the device. Clay swiftly picked it up. Tommy took the opportunity to break free from the last of his handcuffs, rushing over and unlocking Clay’s.

“Thanks, Tommy,” He smiled, wheeling around to punch an oncoming agent in the face.

Tommy nodded proudly, lashing out at a nearby computer tech.

Zzt!

Clay turned, recognizing the sound. Why hadn't the dart hit him?

Tommy smiled weakly, revealing the vine he'd put between Clay and his would-be assailant.

His eyes lolled to the back of his head, and his legs gave out from under him.

From then, they were swamped, and one doctor managed to Wither him.

He could feel the burning under his skin, the pulsating acid in his blood that made him feel like his insides were corroding away inside of him.

His ears were ringing and he couldn't see —

"Let's get this green-eyed problem in an isolation cell," Illumina growled, stalking off to yell at some other poor researcher.

George stared in horror as a limp Clay was dragged off down the cell-lined hallway, his eyes flitting over the rows upon rows of thin pale lines and neat, organized circles of scar tissue on his back.

An iron door *clanged* shut, the harsh sounding carrying both heavy literal and metaphorical meaning.

"Just don't try anything," Manifold whispered to George, who looked at him with a terrified and bewildered expression, "*I'm trying to help you.*"

George nodded, almost imperceptibly, and came quietly.

Punz led the rest of the imprisoned researchers and SCPs back to the cell — Tommy was unceremoniously dragged by stray vines and thrown in.

Tubbo's mind was getting a little clearer every hour, the barest hints of memory starting to tickle the back of his mind.

"T-tommy?"

In the dark, he fumbled around for his friend, hand finally finding a vine. Following it back to its source he found an arm. Tubbo pulled it to him, gripping his shirt and his wrist. Though he couldn't see, Tubbo propped Tommy up against his shoulder, holding onto his arm so he wouldn't fall. The boy's head fell onto Tubbo's shoulder.

Tubbo rested his head on the blond's.

Meanwhile, Clay was just recovering from his Wither. He had a remarkable healing factor — something the Insurgency had tested many, many times.

Where is George?

Is he ok?

He winced as a trace of the black poison pulsed in his veins.

If he'd not been a Hybrid, it would have hurt a *lot* more.

=====

Eret slipped on a pair of blue latex gloves, "Let's get started, shall we?"

Manifold and Eret had *accompanied* George down the opposite hallway that he and the other Foundation members had entered from, it was lined with wards and various rooms for medical equipment. They stopped at a nondescript ward, outfitted with a simple hospital bed.

It was hardly medical... Didn't the Hippocratic Oath say something about *doing no harm*?

"Jack, the serum and *Obliviscopeur*," Eret barked, somehow still smiling pleasantly. "George I'm afraid you'll have to wear this from now on."

He held out a simple white set of SCP's clothes.

"No..." George breathed, realizing what was going on, "No, no no nonono..."

He knew exactly what was going to happen to him.

"Yes," Eret deadpanned, tossing the clothes at him. "Get changed, I'll be back in a minute precisely."

George did as told, seeing the *just-do-it-please* look from Jack Manifold.

His eyes searched the room for something he could do, use...

A scalpel? That wouldn't work, not with both doctors there and with Withers and... god knows what else.

The name *Obliviscopeur* sent up a warning sign in his head, rifling through years of schooling to remember just what the Latin root meant.

Obliviate.

To forget.

"Shit!" George exclaimed, wildly searching the room.

There!

A pen.

He started to write on his palm, but thought better of it. It was too exposed, they'd see it.

Where could he write that they wouldn't see?

The SCP-issue pants came down to his ankles, he could write on his legs free and clear and they'd never know.

Quickly, he pulled on the waistline of his pants, scribbling a message to himself on his own thigh.

Future George... please see this.

"...And we're back," came a knock at the door, and George hastily hid the evidence, dropping the pen quietly on the floor behind the hospital bed. "Ah! You've cooperated."

George stared Eret down through his sunglasses.

"I'll need a small blood sample," Eret commanded as Manifold wheeled in an IV with bags full of clear liquid.

Manifold nodded, grabbing a butterfly-needle from the cabinet and taking George's blood carefully.

"Why are you working with these psychos?" George asked, aiming the question at whoever would respond.

"Simply put," Eret smirked, "I can do whatever I want here. I can run any test, do any experiment, put anyone through anything and no one raises an eyebrow. All those pesky *rules* and *ethics* just got in my way."

Manifold said nothing, finishing drawing the blood.

"Here you go, sir," Manifold sighed, "Am I dismissed?"

"Not yet," Eret said. "George, did you know, there's been some *advancements* since I got to use this on your little friend. Oh, I suggest you lie down for this bit."

George laid back on the medical bed, and Manifold installed a shunt into George's arm. He grimaced.

George! I know you can hear me!

...Clay?

Yes! What are they doing to you?!

Clay, they're gonna—

Eret injected a small portion of George's blood into the IV bag, it changed from translucency to a luminescent neon teal-blue.

"You see, the ones for Techno and Dream were specially made..." Eret explained, "This... this is quite universal."

The liquid started to enter George's veins, each branch of blood-carrying tunnel glowing under his skin.

He could feel his consciousness slipping away, brilliant turquoise filling his vision. Just barely, through the haze, he saw a large black instrument being fitted over his head.

CLAY!

CLAY HELP, THEY'RE GOING TO—

And in George's mind, he screamed.

=====

Clay was going to go out of his mind.

It had been an hour since he'd figured out how to not only *read* minds, but to *send* things.

An hour since George's panicked message, his desperate cry into Clay's brain.

It would haunt him forever.

Harsh hallway light exploded into the cell, momentarily blinding Clay.

A figure was thrown into the cell, unconscious.

Short, dark hair, wearing an SCP's clothes—

George.

The door closed, plunging them to inky depths.

“Georgie,” Clay soothed, rushing over to George's form, picking him up and holding George against his bare chest desperately.

His veins were glowing blue.

Clay stroked George's hair softly, kissing the top of his head softly.

“I'm here... I'm here.”

=====

Another hour of near-maddening silence, and deadly quiet from the boy in Clay's arms.

Then he flickered.

And Clay nearly had a heart attack, watching the boy he loved most strobe in and out of existence.

But he was moving.

Clay let go of him, letting him sit up on his own. The blond could see fairly well in the dark, the colors more muted than they were in light.

George was flickering in and out of color, in and out of transparency, the glowing veins always staying the same.

What is happening to my George?

George was fully awake now, sitting up in bewildered silence.

“George!” Clay smiled, throwing his arms around the boy. He fell forward after a moment, George’s... *flickers* not only taking away his opacity but also his entire being.

George scurried away, and for a few seconds Clay could only see where he was by the veins in his arms.

“George, it’s me,” Clay said, an uneasy knot of unknowing growing in his stomach.

George stayed silent too a moment, backing away farther.

“*George?*” Clay said, a little quieter.

“Wh-h-who a-are yo-you?”

Events Log Fifteen

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Clay felt his heart drop to the pit of his stomach.

“It’s *me*, ” He murmured, refusing to believe what was happening in front of him.

George shook his head, “*G-get away!*”

No.

No.

No no no.

But Clay did as he said, not wanting to spook him more.

The door opened, harsh light burning their retinas.

“He’s awake,” Came Punz’s voice.

Eret appeared, “Good. If you’ll come with us, SCP-N07?”

George nodded timidly, standing from the floor and brushing himself off. Clay pleaded for him not to go, but to no avail. He walked mindlessly out of the cell, following the unhinged doctor.

As *soon* as Clay had returned to his senses and memory... George had been ripped from him.

He opened his mind, reaching out across the halls.

George, you’ve... forgotten about me.

I— it wasn’t your fault.

G-get out!

Out o-of my head!

I...

George I love you.

W-why are you here?

Please, George, remember me.

His connection fizzled out, the former doctor had been put under.

He dug his nails into his own arm, the other hand desperately clutching at golden hair.

...Nick?

He strained to find his mind — it was a lot harder to locate than George's.

Nick!

WOAH! Clay?

No time to explain.

They... they erased George's memory.

What?!

Oh holy hell!

He doesn't remember me at all.

That's rough buddy.

I think you might be next.

...That's foreboding.

They did the same thing to him they did to me, they injected him with something and he started exhibiting SCP behavior, it was like he was flitting in and out of existing.

Like some sort of air-dude?

One second, I have to tell everyone else.

Clay sighed as he let go of Nick's mind.

Why George?

They must have known it would hurt him this much—

Eret, that sick bastard.

A strange sensation of warmth tickled Clay's mind... it signaled George's consciousness. Clay didn't know if he wanted to reach out or not — would it just hurt him more?

C-can you hear me?

Clay's eyes flashed in the darkness.

He was reaching out?

I—

I'm scared.

He scrunched his fists, clenching and unclenching them.

What were they doing to him?

I'm here.

Are you ok?

Look,

I don't know who y-you are.

B-but...

But what?

N-never mind. I can sh-show you later.

The man with the glasses—

H-he keeps saying he wants to... "Wither" me?

They're taking me back.

Oh my god.

Don't trust them.

George, get out of there.

You keep calling me George—

The door opened again. George was roughly shoved down on the floor, the iron cage closing again.

"H-hello." George said, his voice breathy and barely there.

Clay drew his knees to his chest, resting his arms. He buried his head in his elbow.

"Why did you reach out?" Clay muttered, close to tears.

"L-look."

He heard the rustle of fabric, but the door opened again before Clay could look at what George was trying to show him.

“SCP-N07, SCP-534,” An Irish-tinted voice said, smugness dripping from every word. Justaminx.

George flickered nervously, becoming nearly invisible for a few solid moments. The only way Clay could tell where he was was the slightly warped outline that he left.

CLAY ERET’S HERE—

Nick’s voice screamed in his head, abruptly cutting out.

They’d knocked him out.

George, stay calm.

Who. Is. George.

You, for heavens sake!

I-I’m SCP.... N07.

No, you’re fucking not.

“Get off ye arses,” Minx sniped, and Clay shakily stood. “Follow me.”

George returned to opacity, following the doctor through the hall and Clay followed close behind. She led them to a large room down the medical corridor, like a bigger version of the room that George had been brought to.

Inside, there was a hospital bed with a sleeping form, an anesthetic mask fitted over their features.

Clay realized that this was his opportunity to look at the equipment they had. State of the art, they had some stuff that looked nicer than the Foundation’s.

A large black cylinder caught his eye, there was a little plaque that had a word on it. Clay edged closer to it, trying to see a name.

Obliviscateur.

What the hell did that mean?

Eret and Dr. Manifold strode into the room, in medical scrubs.

Clay looked around, perhaps he could make a run for it.

“Don’t try anything,” Minx whispered to him, “I’ve got five sniper rifles and three tranquilizers aimed on you at all times. Plus, you’ll want to watch this.”

Well there went that idea.

“Manifold, why is the patient still wearing an article of their own clothing,” Eret grumped, removing from the poor person’s head. Clay looked up from the machinery, seeing that the item Eret held in his hand was a white headband.

Horried he looked into the face of the person on the medical bed...

It was Nick.

A few more doctors piled into the room, all looking very high-ranked and officious.

“Ladies, Gentlemen, and Honorables,” Eret announced, rubbing his hands together excitedly, “I’m here today to show you the latest development in *Project DeVries*.”

Project DeVries? What the hell was that?

George glanced nervously at Clay, who tried to look as comforting as possible.

“The serum has now been improved so that it is universal,” Eret smirked, “All blood types, all genders, all genetic make-ups, it’s all the same. One-hundred percent survival rate, one-hundred percent success guarantee.”

Mumbles of skepticism crept through the small crowd.

“I see your disbelief, it’s warranted,” Eret grinned, “Doctor Manifold, would you take a sample of the patient’s blood?”

Manifold nodded, stepping in with a butterfly-needle, and Clay watched in abject horror as red blood flooded into a small vial.

“Subject is a healthy twenty-three year old male, seeming to be of Greek-American decent. Manifold, would you introduce the blood sample to the serum?”

Nodding, he slid the needle into the top of the IV bag of serum that waited beside Nick’s head.

Glistening orange bloomed, quickly overtaking the fluid.

“I would advise viewer disgression,” Eret sighed, “Depending on the... *persona* of the subject, the effects of the serum can vary drastically. Some notable differences are that of SCP-534, known as Dream.”

Eret made eye contact with Clay, who was standing in the back. Due to Clay’s height, he had the unfortunate advantage of being able to see everything going on.

“SCP-534 manifested with powers of the psyche and shapeshifting abilities. Meanwhile his predecessor in the experiments — Techno — was injected with the same formula, and developed slight characteristics of a pig, such as larger bottom canines and pink-hued features.”

The brilliant tangerine liquid started to run to his veins. He twitched against his will as the serum burned brighter, much brighter than George could remember seeing in his own blood.

There was the acrid smell of burning — Clay couldn't tell what exactly was burning.

“The process should be done in about an hour, what's that smell—”

Then they saw it, they saw his white SCP's shirt burst into flame. At Nick's sternum, there was a glow deep under his skin, like the heart of a volcano had taken up residence in his own heart.

The flame was swiftly beat out by Manifold, but the smell of burnt material persisted.

The clear plastic of the anesthetic mask was melting.

Manifold quickly ripped it off him, hissing as he burned himself on the hot plastic.

The light from his body was almost blinding.

Rrrrrrip!

The skin on his shoulder tore, revealing a searing luminous mandarin surface beneath. Several other tears in his skin opened, creating the effect of a sea of lava on his skin in places, islands of flesh dotting the burning substance.

The largest of tears one could see was on his left shoulder and his right side of his abdomen.

With the anesthetic mask gone, *he woke*.

Doctors sprung into action, grabbing hyper-sprays and handguns concealed in coats.

Nick raised himself to a sitting position, panting in hatred. Small tendrils of smoke rose from his nostrils. His eyes burned with otherworldly light, yellow-gold irises and pupils of pure white.

Minx shouted orders, to no avail. A nameless scientist rushed forward with a Wither hyper-spray, but never got to use it. Nick caught his lunge by the throat, a single hand wrapped around the windpipe.

An orange glow started to collect in the hand, and the scientist began to scream.

Nick dropped him, the flesh of his victim's neck bubbling and boiling beyond repair, oozing unmentionable things.

He staggered back, realizing what he'd just done. Nick looked at his hands in horror.

“*W-what am I?!*” He yelled, trying to get up from the bed.

BANG!

A concealed sniper rifle shot into his chest.

He convulsed backwards with the impact, but he didn't bleed.

Instead, he smiled as the warm glow of his chest intensified, collecting at the entry point just above his heart. In a moment, the bullet was produced, pushed out of his body with a quiet *schloop*.

Nick grinned wickedly, "*See, now you've gone and made me mad.*"

He huffed, smoke intensifying. Minx stared in horror as he drew in breath only to spew it out, a jet of flame bursting to where the rifle was concealed in the ceiling.

"We have to Obliviate him!" Minx shouted to Eret, who was standing by and smiling wildly, taking down notes. "*DO IT! NOW!*"

Eret looked blankly at her, "You think I'm going to try to subdue *that*?"

She dashed out of the room, bewildered. The rest of the audience of the procedure did the same, rushing and leaving George and Clay behind in their fear.

Clay side-stepped a falling chunk of molten ceiling tile, gently gliding George's shoulders away from the danger. George looked back up at him, scared.

"Nick!" Clay yelled above the uproar, red sirens beginning to go off. "Do you remember me?"

Nick's wide eyes met his own, and he nodded, "*Hell yeah I do, you blob-ass bitch.*"

Clay smiled. "We gotta go!"

"*Clay wait—*" someone said as he was leaving the room...

He turned to see it was George.

"*That is your name?*" He said.

Clay nodded.

"*Look, there's not much time—*"

George pulled down the waistline of his pants, Clay turned around hurriedly.

"*Clay, LOOK!*"

Hesitantly, he swiveled around. There was black scribbling on George's thigh.

"*Guys, we gotta go!*" Nick shouted, gripping onto Clay's wrist. There was a sizzling sound, and Nick let go quickly.

But Clay was rooted to the spot, staring at George's loopy, slanted, and very distinguishable handwriting.

FIND CLAY.

TRUST CLAY

Chapter End Notes

Hi! Jay here- Just a quick thing, I've decided to almost completely redesign the ending plot. Chapters 31-33 are gonna be completely rewritten for theory purposes, and For you Wattpad locals that saw that spoiler last chapter- ...that information is now completely irrelevant. :))))))

~Jay <3

Events Log Sixteen

Clay was rooted to the spot, his mind reeling about what George must have been thinking in his final moments. The only thing that must have gone through his mind as he figured out they were going to *oblivate* him was to *find* and *trust Clay*. No knowledge about what was happening, no clues to what could save him, just complete faith in the one he loved the most to get them all out of there.

And that knowledge was breaking Clay's heart all over again.

"*Dude, we gotta go,*" Nick hissed, his breath the steam of water on lava. He bent over to pick up the discarded headband, tying it back on.

Clay snapped back to his senses, nodding shakily. "Let's go. C'mon, George."

They raced through the hallway, dashing through the chaotic control room and back to the cell-lined hall.

For something called the Chaos Insurgency, they sure didn't handle *chaos* well.

"*Here!*" Nick said, lava spots flaring in anger. The familiar iron door greeted the three Hybrids.

He pounded on the door, leaving sizzling dents. "*Can you hear me?!*"

A muffled "yes" came from inside.

"*Get away from the door!*" Nick shouted.

"How are we going to get through *that*?" Clay sighed frustratedly, "I'm not sure that even *Dream* could get through there."

Nick looked back at the dents in the door, which were more *melted* than *banged in*.

He smiled. "*I can get through.*"

Clay raised an eyebrow as Nick planted his hands on the door, the same fiery glister beginning to grow. The metal started to soften, then to curdle, then to bubble, then to boil where his hands were, melting to red-hot liquid.

He pressed his entire self against the door, gritting his teeth as his heat started to disintegrate the door in its entirety.

"*Ah!*" He yelped excitedly, jumping back as the last of the door melted away, leaving a ragged hole, with the edged still slightly liquidized and glowing with fire.

Clay darted inside, starting to rip chains from doctors and SCPs and help them outside.

“Go go go!” He shouted, pulling Niki and Fundy to their feet and pushing them out the door.

A troop of armed security guards rounded the corner.

“Nick, if you would,” Clay called, but the raven-haired man had already started to advance on the group.

He grinned wildly, walking slowly towards the guards as they shot round upon round into him, having no affect whatsoever.

One of the guards was holding a pistol. Nick walked up to him, and took the barrel of he the gun in his fist.

The security man watched in horror as bubbling black gunmetal dripped to the floor.

WHAM!

Nick threw an uppercut in the guard’s bewilderment, not only knocking him out completely but sending him flying through the air.

“I’m gonna like this.” Nick snarled, yet still smiling.

Clay stopped watching the absolutely mismatched altercation. *Those poor guards.*

“Where the hell is the exit?” Wilbur said, “It’s not like we have a map of this place!”

“I believe I could help with that.” A voice sounded amongst the cacophony of sirens blaring.

Clay whirled around to see Jack Manifold in his white lab coat and headset.

“What do you want, Manifold?” Clay spat.

“I want to *help you.* ” He said, rifling around inside his coat for something... a badge.

He shoved it at Clay, whose eyes widened when he saw the credentials.

“Special Foundation Agent Manifold, at your service,” He smiled weakly.

The Foundation Crest was there, all the codes and various fail-safes present and correct. Clay knew all the ways to tell if a Foundation ID was faked — and his badge passed all the checks.

“Well screw me gently with a chainsaw,” Nick laughed, having walked back to the group a little earlier. *“The doc is on our side.”*

He nodded, “Now follow me.”

George had been silent the entire time, frowning quietly.

C-clay..?

What's wrong?

W-what happened to me?

Why don't I remember anything?

Who am I?

I'll make everything ok again once we get back to Site-143...

Or maybe just somewhere safe.

Ok.

Clay uneasily followed Dr... or *Agent* Manifold through the hallways, sometimes stopping to fight off people that got in their path.

“ANDERSON!”

What now?

Clay turned, to see Illumina heading towards them from behind.

“Piss off, Illumina!” Clay shouted back, ushering everyone forward so that he could take up the rear.

“You're not getting out of here alive!” He shouted angrily.

“Yes we are,” Nick's voice sounded from behind Clay. The rest of the group continued to follow Manifold, while Nick walked to stand by Clay's side. He slammed his right fist to his left palm in the universal sign of *fight me, bitch*.

Clay sensed another presence to his right. He turned, seeing George.

What are you doing here? Run!

N-not leaving you.

G-George wanted me to find you.

I'm s-staying.

Clay nodded, George gave off a faint glow then disappeared completely.

Illumina growled, *“Project DeVries was never about making Hybrids.”*

The ominous sentence sent up warning flags in the back of Clay's mind.

“Look guys, he’s not going to let us leave,” Clay said loudly enough for Nick and George to hear, “Let’s just wrap his up, shall we?”

Illumina smiled savagely, “*You aren’t the only ones who got injected.*”

What—

In a burst of speed, Illumina crashed into Clay, knocking him to the ground. Clay hissed, white claws forming on his fingertips.

Nick was quick to shove Illumina off, burning holes into his jacket.

“*They used to call me speedrunner.*”

What the hell did that mean?

CLAY WATCH OUT—

George’s warning let Clay see Illumina rush towards him again with alarming speed.

Speedrunner...

Speedster.

The serum!

“Nick he’s a speedster—” Dream shouted, using his position on the ground to slam his feet into Illumina’s stomach.

Illumina suddenly had his feet swept out from under him, although Nick and Clay were nowhere near.

“*What—*” Illumina yelled, enraged.

Someone was landing light blows from all around him, someone *invisible*.

George!

“We have to surround him!” Clay called to Nick, “If he tries to run we’ll never be able to catch up!”

Nick nodded, lava glowing angry yellow gold.

George *somehow* had managed to break Illumina’s nose, despite his small frame and less-than-muscular stature.

A second later, in Illumina’s daze, he flickered back to opacity. He was holding a fire extinguisher in his hands.

He faded back to invisibility.

Nick rushed at him before Illumina could run, grabbing his jacket collar and slamming him up against the wall. Smoke rose from his nostrils, eyes burning brighter than they ever had before.

Illumina cried out as Nick's hands burned through layers of clothing, leaving burning handprints on his chest.

WHAM!

Illumina fell to the ground, unconscious.

"Nick, did you do that..." Clay asked, doing a kip-up from the floor.

Nick shook his head.

The fire extinguisher clattered to the ground, now visible. George was nowhere to be seen.

George, where are you?

You can come out, its safe.

I—

I h-hurt someone!

N-no better than them...

Clay sighed frustratedly.

That's not true.

They hurt us for... for no good reason.

You were defending yourself.

C-clay?

I'm scared.

George appeared by Clay's right side, and threw his arms around the taller man's waist.

Nick smiled and nodded, throwing Clay a thumbs-up.

Clay gingerly put his arms around the former doctor, muttering hushed things that he would hopefully find comforting.

"C'mon, let's catch up with the others." Clay said, leading George back to the group, which was waiting at the end of the hallway.

"That was *so cool!*" Fundy exclaimed, "You do realize that once we get back to the Foundation, you're going to have to write reports on *yourselves*, right?"

Clay sighed, “Yeah, I know.”

“This way, quickly,” Manifold said, leading them to a sort of parking garage. The black iron-lined tunnel emptied out into it. It was busy with panicked researchers, no one even stopped to notice the strange group.

“Take these,” Manifold pressed two sets of keys into Clay’s hands, “I have to stay here, continue with my post.”

“Come with us!” Nick said, “We could use a spy.”

Manifold shook his head, “The Foundation needs the information.”

He paused, as if remembering something.

“But take *them* with you.”

He walked to one of the black SUVs, opening the trunk with one of Clay’s keys.

Inside were two cryogenic chambers.

One contained Techno.

The other contained Eret.

“A... a *liberty* I took in the chaos.” He smiled sheepishly, revealing a hyper-spray filled with dusky blue liquid. “Didn’t feel a thing.”

Clay nodded gratefully, “Thank you.”

Manifold grinned, “And the same to you.”

He walked calmly back into the tunnel that led to the compound.

“Car one,” Clay said, “I’ll drive. George, Nick, Sylvee, you come with me.”

“I’ll drive car two,” Wilbur nodded, “That leaves Niki, Zak, Fundy, Tommy, and Tubbo.”

“*Forgetting someone?*” A mischevious voice dripped with impish maleficence.

They wheeled around, seeing a familiar horned figure leaning against a nearby car.

Zak took a step back.

“*Poor Darryl,*” He grinned evilly, “*He could see everything that happened. Must have felt... so guilty.*”

Zak clapped his hands to his mouth, tearing up. Tommy took notice, he and Tubbo stepped protectively in front of the diamond boy.

“*Cute, truly.*” Halo laughed, “*That you think you can protect him from me.*”

Nick snorted some flame, *“And its cute that you think you can take us on.”*

“Not why I’m here, hothead.” Halo sighed, *“This place is... not what I thought it would be. I want to come with you.”*

“Why the hell would we let you come with us?” Sylvee spat, “Bad enough we have to take Eret!”

“That madman,” Halo wrinkled his nose at the mention of Eret, *“Never really hit it off with him. A little too obsessed with his work.”*

Zak built up the courage to speak. “We’re not taking you. You can rot in hell.”

“Language,” Halo muttered. *“...Fine. I didn’t want to do this, I really didn’t. I just want to get out of here, that’s all.”*

Pop!

The horns sunk back into Darryl's skull, the dusky purple fading from his skin completely. The glow left his eyes, the deep emerald green irises returning.

“Z-zak..?”

And it wasn’t Halo who collapsed to the asphalt...

It was Darryl.

Events Log Seventeen

Curiously, Zak was the first to rush forward.

“Darryl?” He shouted, bringing the boy into his arms, “*Darryl!*”

“H-hey...” He smiled weakly, nuzzling his head into the crook of Zak’s arm.

“We can’t leave him behind like this,” Clay sighed as Zak picked the boy up bridal-style. Darryl looped his arms around Zak’s neck.

“He can go in Car Two with me,” Zak said quietly, “I don’t care that Halo is still... *there*. I just want *Darryl* to be safe.”

Wilbur nodded, and everyone quickly piled into the SUVs.

“Where are we even going?” Sylvee asked Clay as she climbed into the back seat with Nick.

“*Well we can’t go back to Site-143,*” Nick said, a sizzling sound coming from the leather seat against his bare back. He cringed a little, trying his best to cool his skin down. He was successful enough to, at least, not set the seats on fire. “*Containment breach and everything.*”

Clay nodded, thinking. He switched on the ignition and pulled out of the lot. He turned down a tunnel marked *Exit*.

He had a good idea as he led the other car down the tunnel.

“D’you ever met an 05 Council member before?”

“*Shit man,*” Nick inhaled sharply, “*Just what kinda clearance do you HAVE?*”

“Let’s just say it’s higher than three,” Clay gripped the wheel a little harder.

“Why do you ask, though?” Sylvee said, clenching her fists at the mere thought of an 05.

“Well, one has a house near here...” Clay said, “George and I used to uh... go there a lot.”

“*What the hell, dude.*” Nick laughed, “*I’m over here with my Level Two clearance. I shouldn’t even KNOW about the 05 Council.*”

“No, you really shouldn’t,” Clay grinned, “I wonder what file you stuck your nose in.

“*A lot of them,*” was the reply.

“I can get us to his house from here,” Clay muttered, “I just need the other car to follow.”

“They will,” Sylvee reassured him.

The cars went undetected among the chaos that was the Cheyenne Mountain, they exited the tunnel and into the bright Colorado night.

“Checkpoint,” Sylvee warned.

“It’s just a boom barrier,” Clay laughed, “They use those things in parking garages.”

Armed guards were at the checkpoint, waiting for the SUVs to slow down and show their clearance.

But they didn’t slow down.

Clay barreled right into the barrier, ripping the entire plastic bar from the mechanism. Wilbur’s car followed close behind.

Clay let out a whoop of adrenaline as the two cars sped off into the night.

“How much gas do we have?” Nick asked.

“Enough,” was all Clay said.

Another hour of mountain roads, and no one besides Clay knew even remotely where they were.

“I wonder if this’ll trip George’s memory,” Sylvee said, “Didn’t you say that he’d go there with you?”

George looked up at Clay from the passenger’s seat, phasing a tiny bit.

Clay nodded, eyes on the road. “Yeah. It’s... it’s a good thought.”

Fifteen more minutes, and they’d be there.

“Don’t tell me that’s where we’re heading,” Nick said in happy disbelief, looking out his window and careful not to touch it.

Clay smiled.

Outside, just in view, was a huge lodge built into the mountainside. It looked like it was in the style of a log cabin, but supersized.

“Yep,” Clay grinned, and Nick made a happy noise.

After a few minutes of driving, they came to a gravel driveway branching off from the mountain road. He pulled onto it, reducing speed a bit. They came upon a locked gate with a number code, which Clay punched in deftly. The gate opened, and the cars continued.

After that was a circular bit of the driveway, it looped back around so one could leave. There was a covered place for the SUVs to stop right outside the doors, like the entrance to a hotel.

Clay hopped out of the car, “Stay here for a minute.”

As soon as he did so, armed guards appeared everywhere, surrounding the cars.

“Who are you, and what are you doing here?” One shouted, wearing a bulletproof vest. Clay lifted his hands above his head.

“I just want to talk to Scott,” Clay said. He realized how weird he must look, shirtless with rows of scars and bloodstained white sweatpants.

The one who had shouted at him put a hand to his ear as if receiving a message.

“Stand down,” He said, and there were the *clicks* of weapons lowering.

A man in an expensive-looking suit and teal-blue hair walked through the main doors to the lodge, smiling. 05 Councilman Scott S. Major — he radiated *power*, a trait that all the 05 Council shared. Clay still wanted to piss his pants sometimes around him, the sheer aura he gave off got intense in moments.

“Anderson!” He said, pulling Clay into a swift hug. “Everyone thought you were dead!”

“I wasn’t sir,” Clay said respectfully, “I’ll debrief you once my team and I are safe.”

Scott looked at him quizzically, “What?” Scott looked Clay over. “Uh, why are your eyes glowing?”

“It’s a long story...” Clay sighed, “We can’t go back to Site-143.”

“Containment breach,” Scott nodded knowingly. “Of course you can stay here! We’ve got state-of-the-art security, this is the best place you can be.”

Clay smiled, “Thank you, sir.”

“Where’s Davidson?” Scott grinned. “I bet he’s ecstatic to have you back.”

"Sir! Heat spike and an electrical outburst from the van!" One of the guards shouted. The rest brought their rifles up one more, red dots littered the car windshield.

"Wait, hold your fire." Scott commanded, "Care to explain?" he asked Clay.

"Uh, I think it would be better to just show you..." Clay said, rubbing the back of his head.

Sapnap and George stepped out, well, George floated through the window -- his phasing in and out of existence making it possible...

"HOLY SHIT!" Scott exclaimed. When the guards raised their guns again, he waved them off. “Anderson, explain. Why is he... see through? And why does *HE* look like fucking human volcano?”

“Councilman sir,” Clay began, “I wasn’t the only casualty of the Insurgency.”

Scott frowned, “I’m not following.”

“Sir, they wiped his memory.”

“Oh god!” Major gasped, looking over at the nearly-invisible George. “Is it reversible?”

Clay nodded, “I had to overcome the same. I broke through eventually.”

Scott gestured for the guards to open the doors to the Lodge. “Well, I’ll help any way I can. When we lost you, it was devastating. We can’t let it happen again.”

Clay shook the man’s hand.

=====

A few hours later, and everyone was settled in. Clay, of course, had changed out of his SCP’s clothes, and into a semi-comfortable dress-shirt and surprisingly soft dress slacks with suspenders.

George was very confused through the whole thing, not speaking a word. Occasionally he’d ask Clay something through his mind, which was always answered in a way that made the boy feel a little better. He *instinctively* knew his way around the Lodge, and it confuzzled him all the more. He’d been fitted with an outfit similar to Clay’s, but no suspenders.

Nick, unfortunately, was excused to be walking around the Lodge shirtless, as every shirt he’d tried to wear had burst into flames no matter how hard he tried not to. Scott had been quite annoyed at that fact, Nick had smiled sheepishly. Eventually, Scott had given up, and told his personal design team to ‘get something together’.

Unfortunately, since there were eleven visitors (and one bedroom had to be converted into a prison cell for Techno and Eret), everyone had to share with one other person. Clay and George shared, as Clay was the only one George trusted. Sylvee and Niki bunked together, mumbling excitedly about something called ‘*girl’s night*’. Zak and Darryl shared. Tommy and Tubbo were also roommates, as well as Wilbur and Fundy.

Nick was the only one left without a roommate, he said he’d just crash with Clay and George if he got lonely or felt like burning things — his quote, “*they’re like, 80% of my impulse control.*”

(And while this was true, I, the author, can give you the slight comfort of the foreknowledge that he did indeed manage to make it through the night without committing arson.)

“C-Clay?”

It was the first time George had spoken that day.

“Hey,” Clay smiled softly, plunking down on the bed in their room. George was already in his pajamas.

(Get your heads out of the gutter; he has amnesia.)

(For now.)

George did the same, albeit much more gently. He took a pillow and hugged it to him.

Clay remembered when he did that back at Site-19... those were the nightmare days. He'd wake up in the middle of the night to see George in that very position, clutching his pillow to him. Clay, after realizing what had happened, often replaced the pillow from then on.

"I don't k-know who I am."

Clay's chest seized up, and if he didn't already know the feeling of heartache he would have thought it was a heart attack or stroke.

"I can try and help." He sighed, "But I don't... I don't..."

He paused, swallowing the lump in his throat. "It's not important."

George startled a bit as Clay scooted closer to him on the mattress and put his hands on George's temples. He'd seen a Vulcan do something similar on Star Trek once... If it was good enough for Vulcans, it was good enough for Clay.

"Trust me, ok?"

George nodded.

He started doing the same thing he always did when he and George talked in their minds — gently pushing thoughts into him. But instead of words, it was more like a mass of memory, a kind of blobby mess of emotions and nostalgia.

Clay wanted to be really easy on the smaller boy, taking everything in at once could be... damaging.

"You ready?" He whispered, just loud enough for George to hear.

He nodded again, *"J-just do it."*

Clay grunted a little bit in concentration.

The memory he'd chosen was the day that they'd realized just how much they loved each other. Well, *night* really. It was 1AM, and George had just woken up from a nightmare. At that point, they lived in adjacent barracks with connecting doors.

There was a gentle tap on the door, rapid and shaky.

Clay grumbled sleepily, trying to find the source of the sound that had woken him up. He quite literally rolled out of bed, falling to the floor with a thunk, his own bedsheets a labyrinthian maze.

The knock sounded again, faster and harder.

Clay finally disentangled himself, rushing to the door that joined his room with George's.

When he opened the door, it was a sad sight.

George was clutching a pillow to him looking terrified with tear tracks down his cheeks.

"H-hi." He sniffed, "I'm sorry."

"Oh my god are you ok--" Clay said, taking George by the shoulders. He blushed a little. "Come in, for heavens' sake."

George shuffled in in his oversized pyjamas. Exceedingly vulnerable, and exceedingly cute.

"What happened?" Clay murmured, sitting him down at the little kitchen table for two. He grabbed a fluffy blanket from his bed and wrapped it around George's shoulders. George shuddered a little, Clay didn't know why. He placed his clasped hands on the table.

"I had a..." George swallowed, "Please don't laugh at me."

"I would never," Clay furrowed his brows. In a senseless state of sleepiness, he wrapped his hands around George's on the table.

He looked up, eyes a little wide, and yet still heavy with slumber.

"N-nightmares." George sighed, "I've been having nightmares."

Clay tightened his hands around George's, rubbing along George's palm with his thumb. "I'm so sorry, Georgie."

"Georgie?" He said, his voice going up an octave.

"Y-yeah," Clay mumbled, suddenly bashful. "What happened, in the nightmare?"

George looked away.

Clay knew not to push much further, lest he risk driving George away.

"Do you need to talk about it, or be distracted from it?"

George looked back into Clay's eyes again, with that intensity that only George could produce.

"I think-" George's voice broke mid sentence, "I think I'd like to be distracted from it."

Clay nodded, smiling quietly. "Come over here," he said.

George furrowed his brows in concerned curiosity, but followed Clay to the mini-kitchen he had in his barracks.

"Call it an old Anderson family recipe," Clay grinned, pulling a bag of chocolate chips out of his cabinet. There were a lot of those bags in there, George noticed.

"Sounds nice," George smiled sadly.

George yawned, rubbing sleep from his eyes with sleeve-paw hands.

Clay saw from the corner of his eye.

And that was when he knew that he was truly fucked.

"I'm so tired..." He murmured, walking to close the distance between the two of them and leaning sleepily on Clay.

"H-hey," Clay replied quietly, moving his arm to George's shoulders.

"Mmm," He mumbled, "You're comfy."

The red on his cheeks and the tips of his ears was quite prominent.

"Thanks," He said shakily.

George shifted, bringing one hand around Clay's waist and the other around in front to meet the first. He nuzzled his head into Clay's side.

"Jus' wanna go to sleep..." He muttered.

"Ok Georgie," Clay laughed.

George's breathing slowed and evened out, his hands falling a little lower.

Clay stopped fiddling with various kitchen implements, realizing that the doctor had fallen asleep on him.

Clay quietly scooped him up, carrying him back to the door.

Shit- it was locked. Clay was so afraid his pounding heartbeat would wake up the sleeping brit.

Clay smiled, it was like the universe wanted something to happen.

He settled the quietly snoring George down onto one side of the bed, spreading a blanket over him. Luckily enough, he'd gotten a nice place at the Site with a bed that was large enough for two friends.

Friends... Yeah... Right.

Clay pushed those thoughts down. He couldn't think like that right now.

He slid back under the sheets on his own side, his brain filled with thoughts that made a greek tragedy look simple. Surely he wouldn't sleep that night. Before he could decide against it, he leaned over and pressed a kiss to George's forehead.

"Goodnight, Gogy."

Events Log Eighteen

The memory faded into the inky black of nothingness, its resolution complete.

Clay sighed, taking his hands from George's temples.

George looked... placid. He was frowning slightly, his expression serene in nature.

"George?" Clay asked, placing his hand on the boy's shoulder.

George slowly opened his eyes, and smiled.

"It's getting a little better," He grinned, "I'm... I'm George!"

Clay was a little disappointed that the memory hadn't shattered the induced amnesia completely, but it was a start.

"Yes you are," Clay exhaled in relief.

"Y-you loved me," George murmured, eyes flitting back and forth like he was reading an invisible text. "A-and I loved you."

"I *still* love you," Clay muttered, "Do you need another memory?"

George shook his head, "No, I'm just... tired."

Clay nodded, bitter pangs of disappointment shooting through his core.

"I'll be right back, I gotta change," He smiled sadly.

Soon enough, he was in a pair of Scott's *suspiciously luxurious* sleepwear, yawning.

He slipped under the sheets, reaching over to turn off the bedside lamp with a *click*.

The room plunged into pitch black darkness.

"G'night, Georgie," Clay murmured, burying his face in a pillow.

George didn't respond.

I'm in some sort of... room? But it looks more like a military base-turned-bedroom. There's a message of white paint on the dull blue-gray walls, "SITE-19".

What in the hell was Site-19?

It's nighttime, there's no lights from under the hallway door and I can hear my next-door neighbor's faint snores.

Time for insomniac doctors to get their sleep.

I can feel something, no- someONE, watching me. The hairs on the back of my neck stand up, like static electricity was arcing through them.

“W-who’s there?” I ask, sitting up.

A pair of glowing green irises pierces the darkness, mere feet from my face.

I try to back away, but I hit the headboard.

“Only me, Georgie.” It rasps, letting out a maniacal laugh.

I grab a pillow.

As if a stupid pillow could protect me from the demons in my room.

My throat starts to close up, like there’s an invisible hand. It’s getting hard to breathe.

Cold panic creeps through my veins, collecting in my heart as the green eyes drift closer and the hand tightens—

“NO!” I scream, a burst of yellow-green energy arcing out from my skin.

I had my eyes screwed closed, I hear something fizz.

I opened my eyes to see a blond man lying face-down at my feet, horrid electrical burns covering his body and burning holes in his clothes.

Did I do that?

I nervously nudge him with my foot.

No movement.

Wait, I know that blond hair.

“Clay?!” I say, struggling to turn him over. Dead, glazed over eyes stared off at the ceiling in shock.

“CLAY!” I sob.

Did I just kill the only person who loved me?!

George woke with a gasp with cold sweat beading on his forehead. He shot upright, digging his nails into the mattress.

Static electricity popped painfully from his fingertips. Just like in the dream.

Would that happen?

Would it happen again?

And why was *everything* so foggy?

Before he could think through it, he reached over to tap the sleeping Clay on the shoulder.

Crack!

A yellow spike of electricity shot from George's fingertip to Clay's back.

He jolted awake, "What the *hell* was THAT?"

George let himself go invisible — being opaque had become such a struggle.

"George?" Clay said into the darkness. His glowing green eyes found a floating pillow in the middle of the room. "George, what happened."

He forced himself to return a little opacity to his skin. "I'm sorry..."

"Hurt like a bitch," Clay sighed, "What *was* that, anyway?"

George shook his head, "Electricity or something..."

Clay's eyes flashed, "Do it again."

"Wh *at?!* " George yelped, "N-no!"

"Not on *me*," Clay laughed, "On a voltmeter or something."

"O-oh," George smiled a little bit, crawling back under the sheets.

"You need to get some sleep though," Clay sighed, "Why were you awake, anyway?"

George didn't say anything.

Clay slipped into his mind, startled at the fragments of pure horror that stuck out of his psyche like glass shards.

"You had a nightmare," Clay muttered, "Didn't you."

George nodded in the darkness.

Clay flipped to his side, propping his head up on his elbow.

"You don't remember this," Clay started, "But I helped with the nightmares once."

"Y-you did?" George whispered.

Clay nodded, "I can help again."

"Please," George murmured, "I-- I don't want to do it again."

Clay smiled in the dark. "Gimme your hand. It won't work without it."

Nervously, slowly, George reached his hand out. They were facing each other from opposite sides of the bed. Clay met his hand with George's, clasping them together.

The process was kind of like a transferal of energy... or rather an absorption of it.

As soon as he started, he felt George start to drift off. He wouldn't have any dreams, not tonight.

Clay fell asleep a few moments later, George's quiet snores had the same soporific effect as waves on a beach.

A few hours later, and the morning dawn peeked its rays through the curtains.

"G'morning," Clay smiled, pulling his hand away so that George could wake up.

He snorted awake -- it was kinda cute.

"Hi," George sighed happily.

"You remember anything else?" Clay asked, stretching and sitting up.

"A little," George grinned, "I... give me another memory, Clay."

Clay frowned and looked at the discarded watch on the nightstand. "You think we have breakfast?"

George nodded excitedly, "Yeah! Clay, I just want to know more."

Hands went back on temples.

What memory now?

It had to be *important* . A key memory that could trigger the rest of his remembrance.

His own disappearance.

He even knew what George's memory of the event was -- back when he was Dream, George had been thinking... very *loudly* . He must have replayed that day over and over again in his head.

Perhaps a combination of his perspective, and Clay's...

His mind started splicing memories together, and feeding them gently into George's consciousness.

One really can't describe the raw *emotion* connected to those memories... the best author pales at the prospect of describing such debilitating *grief* .

The kind of sadness that leaves you numb.

When you can't bring yourself to cry.

When your heart is bleeding from a thousand cuts but feels no pain.

By the end of the memory, both boys were shedding silent tears.

Clay took his hands away from George's head, watching as he slowly opened red eyes.

Without warning, George leapt forward and hugged Clay around the neck, burying his wet eyes into Clay's shoulder.

Clay didn't do anything but hold George to him, savoring the moment.

But all too soon, there was a knock on the door.

"Hey guys-- oh shit, that'll leave a mark--" Nick's voice said, "You guys remember to tell me not to knock on doors."

Clay smiled through his crying, leaning back and gently wiping George's tears away.

"We gotta go," Clay whispered. George nodded, and they both hopped off the mattress and got dressed.

They opened the door, seeing Nick in black pants with three white stripes down the side of each leg.

"No shirt?" Clay smirked.

He shook his head, *"Too much lava in that area."*

Clay sighed, "Scott is *not* going to like it."

"Oh well," he grinned, "I guess I'll just have to visit the tailor again."

(If you know the reference... smh.)

George emerged, wearing jeans and a blue hoodie.

"I think we're supposed to be heading this way," Clay wondered aloud, heading down the hallway that led towards the main foyer.

George nodded and clung onto Clay's arm.

I think...

I think it's starting to come back.

Fina-freaking-lly.

I'm not going to push it, ok?

Y-yeah.

I just might be a little distracted.

Of course, everyone will understand.

They kept walking until they hit the pine-scented atrium, morning light spilling through the twenty-foot bay windows that overlooked the slight canyon dotted with fir trees.

There was a glazed oak table that sat in front of the bay windows, chairs lined up on either side. George took a seat between Nick and Clay. Over the course of five minutes, the rest filtered in.

“Everyone’s awake!” Scott said, walking in. “Good.”

“Sir,” Niki said timidly, her hair still a little bed-headed, “What are we going to do with Administrator Eret?”

Darryl looked *really* tired, halfway leaning on Zak for support (and he didn’t look too much better). *Poor guys*, Clay thought.

Tommy and Tubbo just looked confused, Tubbo was looking at a fork rather anxiously.

“Well...” Scott sighed, taking a seat at the head of the table, “That’s more of a *show* and less of a *tell*. ”

Clay internally rolled his eyes. Why did he always have to put up such a clandestine air?

Breakfast was served, and some of the guests ate with a little *too much* vigor.

By now the sun was fully over the mountains, bathing the scenery in cold yellow light.

“Is everyone *quite* finished?” Scott said, with just a little tinge of disdain in his voice for some people’s table manners. “Good, follow me.”

Fundy was last to rise, scratching behind his ears frustratedly. His tail swished anxiously as he stood to walk alongside Clay.

“H-how long have you known him?” Fundy asked, “Do you know where we’re going?”

“Known him for most of the time I’ve worked for the Foundation,” Clay said, “And no, I have no idea. The only things in this direction are... lemme see... the pool, the library, and a service elevator.”

As if on que, the service elevator in question appeared as the group turned the corner.

“Ladies, Gentlemen,” Scott smiled, punching in a code by the door.

“Where does that lead?” Wilbur asked, a little dubious.

“You’ll see,” Scott grinned, stepping into the open doors. There was, miraculously, enough room for all of them.

“Descending...” a metallic voice said, and the elevator jolted to life.

It was a *long* elevator ride, they must have sunk deep into the mountain.

“You ever been here before?” Sylvee whispered, aiming the question at Clay.

“No,” was his reply.

The doors opened again, to reveal a pristine...

Was that a Site?

It looked like a mashup of Site-143 and of the Chaos Insurgency base, with the same type of control-room layout of the latter and the iconic sterile white architecture of the Foundation.

“Is this...” Nick started.

“Welcome,” Scott said, stretching his arms wide and walking backwards into the room full of office desks and clicking typewriters.

“To 05 Site Major.”

Events Log Nineteen

“There’s a whole Site down here,” Fundy said in disbelief, absentmindedly playing with the tip of his tail in his hands.

“Indeed,” Scott laughed at their expressions of awe, “And it’s yours to use.”

Clay shook himself back to his senses, “Thanks, sir!”

“*But,*” he said, “There is a condition.”

Zak raised an eyebrow.

“I want full reports on... whatever *this* is,” Scott gestured to Clay, Nick, and George (who flickered slightly), “On my desk by evening.”

“Yessir!” Clay laughed, shrugging on a white lab coat that an assistant handed him.

“I’ve also taken the liberty of formally transferring you all to this Site,” Scott mentioned as he walked into the elevator, “So those of you with Level Two clearance and above are cleared to use any of the assets available. Clay, I trust you can help your team maintain some... *discretion* ... seeing the nature of the setting?”

Clay nodded, grinning.

“Oh! And don’t forget to pick up new earpieces.”

The elevator doors closed, leaving the team of eleven to the busy Site.

“Most people here already have a Level Three,” Clay explained, “Just imagine a normal Site, but everyone’s Clearances are offset by one.”

“Holy muffins,” Darryl sighed, “Well, we’d better get started.”

Tommy and Tubbo looked at each other, confused.

“Well now that we know the truth about these two,” Wilbur said, gesturing to the two SCP boys, “We can start research about getting back some of their memories.”

Niki nodded, “Fundy and I will help with that.”

Sylvee crossed her arms, “What about Eret and Techno?”

“We could always try and reverse-engineer the memory tech,” Fundy shrugged, “Taking away memory is easier than restoring it. If we could build one of their wiper machines--”

“We could start working backwards from there!” Wilbur said, excited. “But we’d need a couple of D-Classes for that. I hate using D-Classes.”

“I have just the persons in mind,” Sylvee grinned wickedly, “A traitor and a pig ring any bells?”

“Yes,” Fundy smiled, “That’ll be... I’m not going to say *fun* ... but it’ll be *something*. ”

Darryl sighed, hugging onto Zak’s arm again. He’d looked on the verge of tears for the past hour. Zak kissed the top of his head gently, rubbing his upper arm in comfort.

“Well Zak, I guess that means you’ll have to research me.” Darryl murmured, frowning. Zak nodded.

“And that leaves the three of us,” Clay said to Nick and George, “And for heaven's sake, don’t go anywhere labelled *Secret*. Keep to *Restricted*, please.”

Wilbur nodded mischievously before being smacked upside the head by Niki.

(We’ll follow each of the three groups in this chapter... separated by the usual double-lines. Every time you see them, it means we’ve gone back to this moment.)

Zak and Darryl headed off, following some helpful assistant’s directions to an empty lab.

Zak closed the door behind them, then--

Pop!

“*Well isn’t this cheery,*” Halo’s horns shot out from his forehead, darkness enveloping Darryl’s skin in a matter of seconds.

Something Zak noticed later was that he grew taller by a couple of inches when Halo took over -- not including the horns.

Zak leapt backwards, accidentally hitting a desk and sending papers flying everywhere.

“*Would you please calm down,*” Halo sighed angrily.

“There are cameras in here,” Zak hissed, pointing to the black hemisphere sticking down from the ceiling tile, “If you try anything, security will be here in seconds.”

“*Skeppy shhhh,*” Halo smiled evilly, pressing a finger to Zak’s lips. “*Not here to hurt you.*”

Zak gave the barest hint of a nod.

“*There’s a good muffin.*” He smirked, glowing eyes not showing the barest hint of mercy. He wasn’t going to kill Zak, if he was, he’d have done it by now.

Zak grabbed Halo’s wrist and shoved it away from his lips. “What do you want?”

“*I can’t tell you yet,*” He sighed, “*But I can help with your little engineering project.*”

“How?” Zak said shakily, a hundred memories from his Insurgency imprisonment flashing through his mind.

“Well as soon as I realized that Eret and Techno’s plan was going to fall apart,” Halo sighed, “I thought I’d abandon ship. Ever wonder how Manifold managed to subdue those two?”

Zak gasped, “You didn’t.”

He laughed, *“I did -- that hot-headed fire boy was the tipping point for me. I realized that they had absolutely no idea just how outmatched they were.”*

“There has to be another reason,” Zak scoffed. “You wouldn’t just... help us.”

Halo poked a finger into Zak’s sternum, his face in a mixture of smirk and snarl. Zak stepped away, but the backs of his thighs hit the desk behind him.

“Revenge,” Halo spat.

Knock knock.

Halo’s horns and black-purple skin retreated, looking fully like Darryl again. The only trait that he retained was that of the clawed dusky-black hands that he hid behind his back.

The door opened to reveal another researcher in a lab coat, with strangely grey skin and grey-black hair.

“It is just exposure,” he sighed upon seeing Zak’s face, “I am here to help with SCP-3812. I have some... *experience* with it.”

His voice was heavy with a French accent, he must have come from the Sorbonne Hub.

“Agent A6d,” Halo said with Darryl’s voice (struggling to keep the malice out of it), *“I presume.”*

“Yes,” he said, extending a hand to Skeppy, “Before Dr. Noveschosh took over care; I was the SCP’s handler.

Halo keeps his eyes trained on A6d the entire tedious conversation, clawed hands digging into his palms until the agent stepped out the door.

“The hell was that?” Skeppy hissed, “You had previous handlers?!”

Halo shrugs. *“Unworthy.”*

“And Darryl was?”

The demon quiets, going back to the miscellany of files.

=====

Clay and George were in their lab most of the day, experimenting alongside Nick. They were mostly trivial tests, comparing Clay’s recorded scores on physical and mental tests *prior* to change, and the ones from after.

“Well, your physical tests have gone off the charts.” Nick grumbles. “As expected.”

“You shouldn’t complain-” the blond doctor wheezes slightly. “Mr. lava man.”

Nick rolls his eyes with a smile. “Yeah yeah. It’s really inconvenient you know-”

While this banter was taking place, George wasn’t feeling... right. Sure, that was to be expected, but there was something *off*, something *wrong*.

Something about that damned mission.

The one he couldn’t remember in the slightest.

Maybe if he-

“AARGH-” George cried out in sudden pain, crumpling to the floor and clutching his stomach.

The phases were happening more often, stronger, he was going completely invisible and coming back.

Clay rushed over to his side in a panic, hands falling effortlessly through the other doctor as he pulsed in and out of reality.

“What’s happening to him?!” Clay shouted into the lab.

“How should I know?!” Nick retorts, kneeling on George’s other side, an expression of concern and anxiety on his features.

The two doctors could only watch in horror as George faded out altogether, leaving them with an empty room.

He was gone.

Events Log Twenty

Breath rushed into George's lungs like tsunami waves as he woke in a... A seemingly boundless void. Was this space? No, there weren't any stars. There was none of the natural beauty that space held. It was just the deafening darkness, one that stretched infinitely on around him.

He looked around.

A flash of light played behind his eyes as if having a dream, or a memory, or--

A blinding spark took over George's vision, he couldn't tell whether it was inside or outside his own head--

It bloomed, growing, *growing*,

BANG! BOOM!

The sheer *pressure* against George's senses was almost painful as he watched nebulae of cosmic light and matter and gas whirl past him.

George felt the forces of time pulling on him, moving faster, things growing and collapsing and--

The first stars!

Wait... was this...

The void seemed to travel around him to a star, burning and ferocious. Dirty clouds of smog and matter traveled in rings around the brilliant burning sphere, George watched as they condensed, solidified -- into a planet.

George looked on as time lapsed, watching as red magma and dead brown rock morphed to green and blue.

He observed quietly, some cosmic force rendering him speechless.

And there, on that planet the universe wanted him to see, a civilization was blooming. It raced by, the planet withered to dust.

The next planet.

The same -- rising and falling of *people*, the destruction of the same.

The solar system, in its early stages.

Something in it felt familiar.

He watched some... *things* ... created what looked like a machine. One the size of a continent. He watched as it traveled, and smashed into the giant gas planet George recognized as Jupiter -- creating a storm like an angry red welt.

He watched as a particular planet started to turn green, the third from its star. George observed the growth of the seas, the formation of life--

George saw Earth, and he saw *everything*.

Time went faster, he watched mankind rise again and he watched as the world--

And then he woke up.

And he felt like *shit*.

W-what just happened?

George couldn't remember a single clue about what had just happened to him, just a lot of light and color that hurt his mind to remember.

And then he was keenly aware that he was lying on the tiled floor, and that he could hear voices.

"Clay calm do--"

"Calm *down*? Nick, he's *GONE*!"

"We can find him,"

"I've lost him! AGAIN!"

Clay let out a cry of fury -- George heard a distinct *crack* sound.

George sat up quietly.

Clay? George thought, not wanting to just... suddenly reappear.

"Nick!" Clay was kneeling on the floor. "I think I heard him--"

"Oh *dude* ," Nick knelt on the floor by him, his hand cool enough to pat Clay on the shoulder. "I think that might just be you this time."

Clay, it's me.

George? Is it really you?

Where are you?

“H-hey,” George stood shakily, reappearing in all his translucency form from behind a counter.

“Clay! Look!” Nick exclaimed, forgetting the nature of the situation and rushing forward to hug the doctor. He wrapped his arms around empty air, but George found it funny this time.

George saw the blond rise from kneeling, wiping his eyes on the sleeve of his lab coat. He also noticed that there were dents in the tile, cracks spitting out from them.

How long had he been gone?

Nick came to his senses and released George while smiling sheepishly.

Hands in his pockets, Clay hung back. “Hey, George.”

George frowned, “I-- I’m sorry.”

Clay wasn’t smiling. “Don’t scare me like that *ever* again.”

He paused for a moment.

“Do you...” Nick said gingerly, stepping away from George, “Do you remember anything?”

George sighed and shook his head, “Just a lot of light and... yeah, that’s about it.”

“I think he meant *other* things,” Clay sighed.

“Oh,” George looked down at his shoes, “No. Nothing.”

Clay exhaled as if trying to calm himself.

“Do you have any idea where you were?” Nick asked, glancing concernedly at Clay while speaking.

A shake of the head.

“Well *there’s* another puzzle to solve,” Clay exclaimed bitterly, throwing his hands in the air.

“We’ll figure it out eventually,” Nick smiled. His grin was genuine -- and George was grateful for it.

“We might as well try and get *this* mess all explained,” Clay grunted, gesturing towards George. He was a little confused, why was Clay so defensive all of a sudden?

“Follow.” Was all he said, turning and bursting through the lab door.

George glanced anxiously at Nick, who shrugged.

While following the briskly walking blond, George reached out to try and touch the wall. Letting his hand trail behind him, he tried to reach out.

And for a millisecond, he felt the cold painted drywall--

But then that millisecond was gone, and he phased right through.

Clay seemed to be reading signs on the wall, following invisible arrows that pointed to his destination.

"In here," Clay said, opening the door for the other two. He refused to meet George's eyes.

In the middle of the room, an ominous sight waited. A large metal cylinder with various modules and tubes running off of it, about three and a half feet in height and half a foot in width. It sat on a table, and was made out of sterile white metal. Just like everything else in the Site, George remarked.

Clay unceremoniously pointed to a slot at the bottom, "If you would put your hand in there."

George obliged, a little shocked at Clay's sudden gruffness. Had he done something? He placed his hand inside of the slot.

Clay put his eyes to the duel eyepieces, fiddling with knobs at the sides. "Nick, the lights,"

Nick gingerly dimmed the light level in the room, managing to not melt the lightswitch.

Clay's eyes gave off a soft green glow.

"Are you *sure* you don't remember anything?" Nick asked.

Little flashes played behind George's eyes.

"It's coming back," He murmured, Clay made a little concentration noise. Maybe it was towards something else, but he kept futzing with the microscope. "I think I saw... I think I saw the big bang."

"*Dude*," Nick grinned, "That must've been cool."

George smiled slightly, "I guess it was. Kind of hurt, though. There was some other stuff. Stars, and I maybe saw a few um... civilizations."

Nick raised an eyebrow, "Non-Terran ones?"

George nodded.

"Inch-resting," Nick's eyes glazed over, seeming to retreat back into his own head for a second.

"How much longer?" George murmured to Clay.

“Not much,” He muttered, “I just need to get a clear view -- like a picture of your molecular composition--”

He froze.

“Well this explains a lot of things,” Clay breathed.

“What are *things*?” George asked anxiously.

“You experienced space-time, George,” Clay looked up from the microscope, again not meeting George’s eyes. “You quite *literally* went out of this plain of existence.”

“Clay, how the hell,” Nick began, but Clay cut him off.

“Look.”

Nick lowered his face to the eyepieces, careful not to touch them. “*Oh.*”

“Guys..?” George said.

“*Billions* of years,” Clay crossed his arms, “instantly.”

Nick looked up, “Dude, you’re literally out of this world.”

George raised an eyebrow.

“He means,” Clay frowned, “That you’re technically an illusion. A sentient image, made out of cations.”

“That’s not--” George swallowed down the lump in his throat, “That doesn’t sound very good.”

“No!” Nick said, excited. “That’s the thing, you showed us earlier that you can manipulate energy, yeah?”

George nodded, utterly confused.

Nick’s demeanor was oddly juxtaposed to Clay’s. Nick was practically fangirling over theoretical physics. Clay looked like he was *insanely* interested in whatever was going on science-wise, but for some reason wasn’t letting himself show any emotion other than... detached.

God, why can't I just remember?

“Remember what I said about electrons,” Clay said almost fearfully, fiddling with a pen. “What if you just... coat yourself. Or like, fill yourself with them?”

“Then he’d have a form!” Nick finished, smiling. “Didn’t you do that last night? And this morning! You could do it again!”

“Yeah!” Clay suddenly broke into a grin, but tamped it down as quickly as it came. “I mean, yes. Like this morning, when I showed you that memory...”

George *remembered* that. “But that got so *hard*...”

“You don’t have to do it all the time,” Clay said quietly, finally looking George in the eyes. It was startlingly intense -- like he’d been holding back floodgates. “But *please*, George, you have to try.”

George nodded shakily, “I promise.”

Events Log Twenty-One

“Are those my diamonds?” Zak asked curiously, peering over Halo’s shoulder at a circular device, three inches in diameter. It seemed to have a black outer rim of various tech, with an inner lens-thing of perfect, smooth *diamond*.

“Maybe. These go in the Obliviscateur headsets.” Halo narrowed his eyes. *“But if I’m to work with you in finding out the purpose, I need something from you.”*

“And what’s that?” Zak shifted uncomfortably. It couldn’t be good.

“Your complete and unwavering cooperation.”

Zak thinks for a moment, surely this wasn’t all.

There was always a price.

“I agree.” Zak muttered, glancing with more intensity at the lens in Halo’s hands.

Halo smirks, turning from where he stood to look at the security camera.

“Say hi to my friend,” Halo instructed, waving at the camera. He turned to speak back to the camera, *“He’s agreed. Bring the files.”*

“What files..?” Zak said, “Halo, what are you planning?”

“I already told you that,” his smile disappeared, *“You really should pay more attention.”*

Zak didn’t really have the courage to say anything else. Who knows what he’d do to Darryl? Would he... *No*. He wouldn’t go that far.

“He’ll be here in a minute,” Halo grinned, sending shivers down Zak’s spine. His smile was identical to Darryl’s. But it held an element of... derangement. *“And then you’ll see.”*

Zak nodded hesitantly, picking at the edge of the desk on which he was perched.

Knock knock.

“Hey it’s me,” A young-sounding voice said, Zak was sure he’d heard it somewhere before.

“Come on in,” Halo responded. The door opened to reveal a blond boy that Zak knew all too well.

“Him?! He’s Chaos Insurgency!” Zak yelled, starting to reach for his earpiece.

Halo snatched Zak’s wrist violently, his nails digging into the underside of Zak’s wrist. He got scarily close again-- *“We made a deal.”*

Zak let his hand drop, submitting it to Halo's grasp.

"Purpled," Halo smiled serenely, *"Would you like to show Dr. Ahmed here the files?"*

Purpled grinned, fishing around in his jacket for something in one of the pockets. "Here," He said, producing a badge. "I'm not Insurgency, I swear. I went in with Manifold, we were sent in together."

Zak took the badge, inspecting it for all the failsafes.

All present and correct.

"Special Agent Purpled," Zak scoffed, smiling slightly. "How long exactly have you been undercover? And why are you *here*?"

"That's simple!" The boy laughed, he had a slight lisp. "They kinda enlisted me to be a spy for them, so they got me transferred here. I've been undercover for two years, alongside Manifold."

"Can we please get back on task?" Halo sighed irritably.

"Shit! Sorry," Purpled said.

"Language."

Zak thought that was odd -- someone with Halo's sardonic personality wouldn't usually care about swearing.

Unless...

Maybe Darryl was stronger than any of them thought.

"Cunt." Zak said bluntly, right to Halo's face.

"Language!" Halo said, exasperated. *"What was that even for?"*

"Shit." Zak smiled.

"Don't make me say it again!" Halo snarled, his hands twitching.

"Bitch-ass-motherfu--"

"ZAK!" Halo's eyes flickered to green for a full few seconds, before returning to white.

He's still in there.

Purpled raised an eyebrow, "You two fight like an old married couple."

"We're just as stuck with each other," Zak grumped, veiling his absolute elation with a film of irritation. Darryl was still there. He was still fighting. Darryl could get out of this... Zak just had to help.

"I guess it's an adequate analogy," Halo smirked. *"Please, the files. We're getting sidetracked."*

Purpled revealed the briefcase he'd been holding (*how had Zak not seen it?*), and set it down on a nearby counter. He unlocked the catches with a *click*, revealing a small pile of manilla folders underneath.

"This is all I could snag," Purpled sighed, "Any more, and I could be outed."

"That's all we need," Halo reassured, moving two off the top to get to the third underneath.

"Take a look at this." Halo said, handing the folder to Zak. Inside, there were two sheets of paper.

Blueprints

"These look like... wait, is that one of the lenses?" Zak said, bringing a pair of reading glasses out of his lab coat pocket. "Halo, lemme see the lens."

Halo obliged, handing over the item in question. *"Try anything, muffin, and you'll regret it."*

Zak nodded, comparing the diamond lens to the one pictured. The device was about three inches in diameter and one-and-a-half in thickness, it had a black metal mech rim on the outside that took up about half an inch of space on the lens.

They were one in the same, no doubts about it.

"The next blueprint," Purpled said, pointing to the remaining sheet in the folder. "Is what we believe the lens would be attached to."

other blueprint

Zak looked at it for a few moments before Halo snatched the lens back.

"That's not all," Halo said, handing the top folder to Zak.

Cover Page

"Top Secret, huh." Purpled laughed, "I guess that didn't really work out for them."

"Look at the next page, Skeppy." Halo said, impatient.

"Why are you showing me this?" Zak said, flipping the page and sliding the reading glasses back up the bridge of his nose. "It's not like we're exactly on the same side."

"That's less accurate of a statement than you may think." Halo grinned, bringing his face very close to Zak's. *"The enemy of my enemy..."*

"Is my friend." Zak finished, going a little red.

God, why did his facial expressions have to be *so* like Darryl?

“-*ahem*-” Purpled coughed in the background.

“*Look at the goshdarn file, Skeppy.*” He said, pulling away.

Zak, a little shaken up, returned what was left of his focus back onto the documents in front of him.

overview page

“There’s six stages,” Purpled sighed, “But I could only get my hands on the semi-redacted version. Unfortunately, stages two, five, and six are cut completely.”

“As well as the mission statement,” Zak huffed, smacking the paper. “We don’t even know what the hell they want.”

“*Language.*” Halo muttered.

“I think we can get somethin’ together though,” Purpled frowned, “The next couple pages look over that.”

next three pages

Zak kept reading, sometimes the red ink of the stamps got in the way of the words.

“What do you think Step Two was?” Zak asked, raising an eyebrow as he set the glasses down on top of his head.

“*No clue,*” Halo shrugged, “*Eret was extremely secretive about that bit.*”

Purpled nodded, “I even worked with him a little on Step Three. We were talking about making mini memory devices for agents, so that if they got caught in the field, their memories would be wiped.”

Zak shuddered, “That’s gnarly.”

“*Don’t even bother with Steps Five or Six,*” Halo sighed, “*It’s just something saying Incomplete with no real text on it.*”

Zak set the folder down. “What do you two want?”

“*He and I formed a sort of... alliance.*” Halo gestured to Purpled, “*While we were at the Insurgency.*”

“And you’ve dodged my question *again,*” Zak exhaled, pinching the bridge of his nose. “It’s not like I have a choice to help you, I just want to know what we’re doing.”

“*I might not have liked the way the Foundation treated me before I met Darryl,*” Halo’s eyes flashed to Zak’s, “*But I don’t want the Insurgency to... do anything to it... They’re a lot less capable than they seem, in their hands, things could go horribly wrong, for everyone.*”

“Not the question,” Zak pressed further, seeing Halo get slightly more frustrated. “What are we doing, Halo?”

“For now, we’re just trying to build ourselves an Obliviscateur.” Halo frowned, snarling slightly to show his fangs. *“And then working backwards from there.”*

“You’re not going to tell me anything else?” Zak frowned, crossing his arms.

Halo snarl-smiled back at him. *“No.”*

Supplementary Log: Reports

"Councilman Major, sir?"

Scott looked up from the letter he was writing, capping his pen.

"What is it, Anderson?" Scott smiled.

"Those reports you wanted," Clay said, "They took *forever* to make, but we got there."

"Good!" Scott said, taking the three manilla folders the doctor handed him. "How's... how's George? You and him doing ok?"

Clay smiled sadly for a moment. "I don't know sir. I don't want to lose him again."

"Well, from what I hear, you've been pretty cold to the fellow." Scott laughed, "Shutting yourself off never helped anything."

Clay laughed a bit, "With respect, sir, where the *hell* have you been hearing that?"

"I have my sources. I'm 05 Council, it's my job to know everything." Scott smirked.

"Well then," Clay sighed, "Thanks for the concern, but I've got everything under control. I'll leave you to your reports."

"Dismissed," Scott ordered, and Clay left the office.

Let's see what you three really are...

Scott opened the folders one by one, ready to take in every detail.

They even classified themselves -- must have been a hoot to watch.

He turned his attention to the file devoted to Clay.

=====

Item #: SCP-534 (Dr. Clay Anderson)

Class: Elucid-Keter, Orange to Red Threat

Disruption Level: Ehki (4/5)

Risk Class: Warning (3/5)

Special Containment Procedures: Subject was flown to Denver International Airport immediately upon discovery, it arrived heavily sedated and bound. Subject has been placed in

the Site's most secure containment area, according to its possible Red-Level threat. Unit is equipped with gaseous-released sedatives and pathogens. Subject seems to be averse to high levels of light, floodlights have been installed in the ceiling as a cautionary step.

[REVISION:] Doctor Anderson is a Threat Level White, as he works for the Foundation. The notes above only apply from when it was not known of SCP-534's true identity. No containment needed as of present.

Description: *Subject is a form of white mass, no identifiable skin or organs, only white matter that seems to resemble flesh in texture. Subject was brought in and measured as 192 centimeters, or 6'3". Subject weighed in at 204.35 pounds.*

When the Subject was found, it was considerably larger, witness accounts of Agents ██████████ and ██████████ both corroborate that the SCP was at least eight feet in height, and shrunk once sedated. This leads Dr. Davidson and I (Dr. Armstrong) to believe that the SCP possesses shape-shifting abilities.

[REVISION:] SCP-534 Is noted to have powers over psyche and fluid physiology. SCP-534 possesses multiple mental abilities. Telepathy, Mind Reading (to an extent), Illusions, Intimidation/Fear and even transference of memories and flashbacks. SCP-534 is also noted to have the ability to shapeshift into a seemingly unlimited number of forms. SCP-534 currently favors the form of itself (Dr. Anderson) before experimentation. SCP-534 has appeared multiple times as a 8-16 foot tall pale being with glowing green rings as irises.

Subject was found wandering the Everglades, crocodile blood was found on its... face. The face resembles some kind of macabre smile, two large voids that resemble eyes, there is an iris of neon green that gives off its own light. It's mouth can only be described as carnivorous, it has one row of extremely sharp teeth that should not be touched anywhere on their surface at any time. (See Minor Injury Report # ██████████) Its mouth stretches the width of its head, which is perfectly spherical.

[REVISION:] The information above is abjectly false. Dr. Anderson was Turned against his will by a former Chaos Insurgency operative, former Administrator Eret using a serum only known as part of the Project DeVries. It has been lost, never seen since the incident at Cheyenne Mountain.

Subject is thought to possess powers such as shapeshifting, further research will be done to test for others.

[REVISION:] This theory has been confirmed.

=====

“Limited mind control?” Scott muttered anxiously, “That’s a bit overpowered. What were they thinking...”

Next was the file marked “SCP-N07”. Scott of course knew that this referred to George.

=====

Item #: SCP-N07 (Dr. George Henry Davidson)

Class: Euclid

Disruption Level: Keneq (3/5)

Risk Class: Warning (3/5)

Special Containment Procedures: Dr. Davison is Threat Level White, and does not need to be contained as he is a sentient member of the Foundation, and works for it after his Turning.

Description: SCP-N07 is an interesting case. This SCP is not made of anything in the 5 states of matter. It is composed of pure energy. However, this SCP takes the form of itself (Dr. Davidson) prior to experimentation. This SCP is translucent most of the time but for around 5-7 hours per day, it can remain in it's opaque 'human' form. In that form, it is not composed of cells or regular human physiology at all, but is still energy. Despite this, the body functions exactly as if it was normal. In fact, the only difference is an electrical signal 10x higher than a normal human.

SCP-N07 is noted to be able to phase through walls. The theory behind this is that energy is fluid — it can transcend space and time. The physical manifestation of SCP-N07 is at the present but the energy itself, part of it's 'body' per se is at a point of time where the obstacle of time is nonexistent. Like a soul, or spirit. SCP-N07 has mastered the ability of harnessing electrons (as these particles are indeed what makes “stuff” feel solid) and using them as a coating to not phase through objects.

SCP-N07 is also noted to be able to manipulate and weaponize electrical pulses. The highest recorded output discharged was 3.27 gigajoules with is more than a million times the amount of electricity able to be discharged from a standard outlet.

=====

“Phasing through solid barriers,” Scott laughed, “Huh. Well, good thing he’s not an enemy.”

Scott had gotten the news that the small doctor had somehow broken Head Administrator Illumina’s nose... news that had somewhat shocked him. Who knew the little guy had it in him?

And finally, was the one that Scott was looking forward to the most.

SCP-549.

Nick Armstrong, the lava boy.

He opened the file, noting that it was a page longer than the others. Anatomy report, it read.

=====

Item #: *SCP-S49849 or SCP-SAPNAP (Dr. Nick Armstrong)*

Class: *Keter*

Disruption Level: *Ehki (4/5)*

Risk Class: *Danger (4/5)*

Special Containment Procedures: *Dr. Armstrong is Threat Level White when not feral, and does not need to be contained as he is a sentient member of the Foundation and works for it after his Turning. When feral, however, he is a Threat level Red, and can only be contained via the use of Liquid Nitrogen Canisters for weakness, and Liquid Helium or Liquid Hydrogen for a more potent affect.*

Description: *SCP-Sapnap is not malicious (normally) and will only attack when provoked and agitated. SCP-Sapnap takes the form of a molten magma, rocky, slightly metallic humanoid that resembles itself (Dr. Armstrong) prior to experimentation. When severely agitated or injured — or more importantly — when his friends are in danger, Sapnap might become feral. At this stage all the culprit(s)'s can do is prepare for death, and pray for mercy. Feral Sapnap is exceedingly violent. He has a 87% mortality rate.*

Anatomy requires a second report, found below. Much research has been done.

Anatomy report: SCP-S49849

This SCP's anatomy is incredibly complex. It is currently one of the 247 only bio-inorganic (composed of both organic (cells) and in-organic (metals, elements) materials) sentient beings existent in the known universe. The SCP's heat depends on a lot of factors, such as mood, adrenaline levels and more. The first number on the scale is the minimum and the last is the maximum. The materials listed below are no the only things in it's anatomy, there are also a significant number (37%) of the original human cells left. These cells have a symbiotic relationship with the living metal and living elements within the SCP. EVERYTHING IN THE SCP IS ALIVE, IT PRACTICALLY HAS METAL/ROCKY CELLS. The SCP's cells and itself can survive a blistering 10000 celsius without degrading.

0. Core - The core is located in the upper chest region, where the heart and part of the lungs would be. It is a lump of molten, solid (solid due to pressure (solid liquids)), pressurized radium and tungsten. It acts as a temperature regulator and is the 'heart' of the SCP. The core

is a staggering 3750 celsius to 6750 celsius. It's radiation level is 25 roentgen (Thats about 3475 chest x-rays)

1. Reactor - The first layer around the core, it is composed of semi-molten lead and uranium. It acts as the 'organs' taking heat and radiation from the core to create energy like a nuclear reactor. It is 2500 celsius to 4750 celsius and it's radiation level is 10 roentgen.

2. Ossa Metallum (Latin for metal skeleton) - The skeleton of the SCP is composed of pressure strengthened titanium and gold. It acts not only as the skeleton but also as a super-insulator/conductor. It is only a measly 900 celsius to 3000 celsius and has no levels of radiation.

3. Super Inductors - This layer acts as the muscles and the inductor. It can harness the radiation and heat within to heat the Dermis up to 4500 celsius, which is higher than any natural elements melting points. This layer is only 200 celsius to 2500 celsius. It is composed of magma and iron.

4. Dermis - The layer of the skin. It is rocky and partially volcanic black in appearance. The layer is composed of volcanic rock and minuscule lava streams that run through the cracks in the Dermis. Normally it is a cooler 37.5 celsius. However, it has a maximum potential of 4500 celsius.

Eyes - The SCP's eyes are composed of extremely heat resistant ocular cells that 'live' within a sphere of superheated iron.

This SCP does not need to eat (It can though) as it takes energy from it's core and reactor.

=====

“Well I’ll be damned,” Scott scoffed incredulously, “Really dug your own grave this time, haven’t you Eret.”

He reached down to the bottom-left most drawer in his desk. Upon opening it, it could be seen that it was actually a safe.

He scanned his thumbprint on the little pad, which revealed another lock underneath. A combination lock.

After the three numbers were inputted and the lock gave a soft *click*, the last latch opened and the lid to the safe lifted.

He set the three files inside.

“Major to Purpled. I’m going to need you to make a delivery.”

Events Log Twenty-Three

===== *Back to the moment where the three teams split...*

~"And that leaves the three of us," Clay said to Nick and George, "And for heaven's sake, don't go anywhere labelled Secret. Keep to Restricted, please."

Wilbur nodded mischievously before being smacked upside the head by Niki.~

Darryl and Zak headed off by themselves -- Sylvee noticed with weary interest that there was a moment while Darryl was walking off that he suddenly straightened his posture in an instant, his walk also changing slightly.

She had her suspicions, but she wasn't about to act on them. Clay, George, and Nick also walked off in another direction, and by the looks of it they'd be *waaaay* across the building, nowhere near each other.

Again, she had her suspicions.

"Did Scott have two people in cryo chambers transferred down here?" Wilbur asked, showing an officious looking secretary his level-two badge.

"The pig and the doc? Yeah, they were carried down to the B-Section. Lab B-103, you can't miss it. Third doorway on the right." He said, his expression showing mild distrust. He went back to layering dark purple nail polish on his left hand.

"Why is it *103*? Are there really over a hundred labs here?" Niki asked.

"Oh, the one-hundred bit is only because of the floor num--"

"That's quite enough," A voice said, someone new gripping the secretary's shoulder from behind, making him gulp.

"Administrator Spifey, sir," The secretary smiled nervously.

"Dismissed," the man said. Once he was gone, he turned back to the group of four. Well, six. Tubbo and Tommy had instinctually followed them, which was good.

"Hey," he smiled, seeming to be genuine. "Admin Spifey, I run this area of the compound. Call me Geo, call me Spifey, I don't really care. How can I help?"

"Just looking to get to the lab," Fundy said. Fundy really hoped this man didn't really know how to tell emotions via animal ears -- he was having a hard time keeping them from being flat against his head.

“Ah! Down the middle hall,” He pointed. Out of the main kind of secretarial area they were in, there were three hallways branching off. One to the right, one to the left, one dead ahead. “Third door on your right.”

“Thanks!” Sylvee said, using her new lab coat to wipe a smudge off her glasses.

“Oh,” Spifey smiled, “I’d like you to meet your new labmates. Scott said to assign you guys our best and brightest to help. These three are truly mental marvels, surpassing everyone else. They’re the pride and joy of the Site. And here they are!”

The group turned to see three people in white lab coats walking up to them, chatting excitedly among themselves.

“Doctors Grace, Bravura, and Wadham,” He pointed to a blond, a raven-haired, and a brunette. They waved hello as they closed the distance between the two groups.

“Hey! I’m Shelby Grace,” The blond smiled, shaking Niki’s hand. “But I go by Dr. Shubble around here.”

“My name is Jessica Bravura,” The ravenette echoed, somewhat shorter than the other two women. “Call me Doc Aphmau.”

“And I’m Amber,” The brunette said, “Dr. Wadham. Just call me Amber.”

Sylvee beamed, “Hey ladies! Glad to be working with you!”

Shubble grinned, “And we’re excited to be working with you on the Hybrid and the traitor!”

“Wait,” Wilbur said, “What about me and Dr. Janssen?”

“SCP-TV880 and SCP-T0334 will need to be looked after,” Spifey’s eyes flitted to the two SCPs, “Something tells me they won’t take too kindly to being separated from you.”

“I’ll go with Will and Fundy,” Niki spoke up, “To help with the two SCPs.”

Spifey nodded, “Then Miss Sylvee, would you like to work with our three brightest on Former Administrator Eret and the pig hybrid?”

“I’d love to,” She grinned. “Still lab B-103, right?”

Spifey nodded. “And Sylvee, for the remainder of your work with these three, you’ll be granted a temporary third-level clearance.”

“This way,” Aphmau smiled, leading the group of four women down the middle hallway.

Spifey turned back to the remaining five. “Where would you like to proceed from here?”

Wilbur spoke up, “Well sir, our end goal is to get their memories back.”

“Ah,” He sighed, “The nasty *Eret* business. Well, even the Foundation hires a few bad apples.”

“*Bad apples?*” Fundy said, “With respect, if it’s that apparent that these people are ‘*bad apples*’, they really shouldn’t have been hired in the first place?”

Spifey sighed, “Right you are. Unfortunately, I’m not in charge of recruitment.”

Fundy smiled.

“Well,” Spifey continued, “Your lab is down hallway C. C-108.”

“May I ask where the others are?” Niki said.

“Doctors Noveschosh and Ahmed are in A-114, and Davidson, Anderson, and Armstrong are in B-125.”

Niki frowned, they were all *really* spread out. She’d only known the others for a couple days, tops, but she still trusted them more than anyone here.

This place gave off a weird vibe.

“You might want to start with an MRI,” Spifey suggested as he walked them to their lab, “It’s located in room C-117.”

“Good to know,” Wilbur replied, “We could definitely start there, see exactly what neurons were damaged.”

Fundy shook his head, “I think we should just continue our L’manberg research for now. At least a day. They were just starting to exhibit speech capability.”

“I agree with Floris,” Niki said, smiling at Tubbo (who had his nose in a flower that Tommy had offered him). “In case the MRI doesn’t find anything, we could always just talk to them.”

Will sighed, but nodded. “Yeah, I guess you’re right.”

(None of them had noticed that while they were talking, Administrator Spifey had disappeared.)

But what Niki *did* notice was her earlier conversation with the secretary.

What had he been about to say? She looked back in her memory--

“*Oh, the one-hundred bit is only because of the floor num--*”

Floor numbers.

Niki scrunched her eyebrows together. *What were they so secretive about on the lower floors?*

“This is us,” Wilbur smiled, guiding the other four inside. The standard -- two hospital beds with IVs standing by, counters filled with various medical supplies, the like.

“Where should we start?” Fundy smiled.

=====

“Wait up!” Amber laughed, jogging a bit to catch up to the other three.

“I can’t believe we’re working with a *Hybrid*,” Shubble inhaled, “I’ve read all of Dr. Anderson’s reports from before he went missing, they’re *fascinating* ...”

“~*ahem*~ *simp*--” Amber coughed.

“I am not a simp!” Shubble giggled, “For the last time, I like the *science*... ”

Sylvee chuckled, “Have the three of you heard that he’s not missing?”

“*What?*” All three of them said at once. They stopped in their tracks in the hallway, several doctors and nurses shifting to walk around them.

“What happened?” Aphmau gasped. “Is he *dead*?”

“He’s literally in lab B-125 right now.” Sylvee grinned, “It’s a *loooong* story, and I’m not sure if I’m even allowed to tell you.”

Shubble placed her hand concernedly on Sylvee’s arm, “Honey, we’ve been working for Level Four clearances for most of our careers, so if you’ve got tea to spill, for heaven’s sake *spill it*. ”

“Well...”

Events Log Twenty-Four

Trying to look as inconspicuous as possible, Halo and Zak walked arm-in-arm down the B hallway.

“What if we get caught?”

“We won’t get caught.”

“We’re not supposed to leave this floor, it might be top-secret or something,”

“Calm down. It’ll be fine.”

Zak took a few breaths, scratching at the back of his hand. For some reason the diamonds had gotten a *lot* worse lately, they felt like they were on fire all the goddamn day.

“You’re panicking.”

Zak nodded shakily. Everything about this situation freaked him out -- from just being *alone* with Halo to having to go behind the Foundation’s back and sneak around in one of its own Sites.

He hated the whole thing.

“Just breathe. Act normal,” Halo muttered out of the side of his mouth so that only Zak could hear as they walked. *“You’ll be ok, everything’s fine. Breathe.”*

Zak took a shaky breath. Halo’s grip on his arm got a little more friendly, transferring from a vice-grip to keep him from escaping to more of the way the real Darryl had used to lean on him.

What the hell is he up to? Why is he starting to be... nice?

The end of the B hallway was only a hundred or so yards farther.

“So,” Zak said quietly, “how’s being y’know, a shadow demon?”

Halo tilted his head down slightly to look at Zak, bemused. *“I guess it has its perks.”*

He went back to silence after that.

But unfortunately for him, Zak felt chatty.

“Like what?”

Halo sighed, rolling his eyes. *“Do you ever shut up?”*

Zak laughed a little, his sense of rational fear switching off completely. “I mean yeah, but that’s really something that only Darryl can do,”

“I doubt he’s the -only- one,” Halo smirked, *“I could kill you before you could even blink, doesn’t that scare you?”*

“To be completely honest,” Zak said (at this point he was just poking the bear for poking the bear’s sake), “The existential weight of the universe scares me a lot more than you ever could.”

“Is that so?” Halo murmured, looking sideways to meet Zak’s eyes. *“I’ll just have to try harder, then.”*

No, that wasn’t fear settling in Zak’s stomach. It felt different, somehow.

The end of the hallway was fifty yards away, give or take.

“I thought we called truce,” Zak pouted. “Don’t tell me you’re just going to... backstab me or something.”

Halo laughed softly, *“If I was going to kill you, I would have done so.”*

“I guess that’s comforting..?” Zak raised an eyebrow.

Twenty yards.

“I might let Darryl say hello after we’re done, if you’re good...” Halo sighed, *“Possessing someone’s body is a lot harder than you might think.”*

“Oh?” Zak smiled, “Really? That’s actually... really nice of you.”

“Don’t get used to it,” he snarled, *“I’m just tired.”*

“Thanks, anyways.” Zak grinned, “Maybe we should make this truce permanent. If we team up with the others--”

“No.” Halo shook his head vehemently, *“Just you. And don’t get ahead of yourself.”*

“Ok,” Zak shrugged.

And there it was, the door at the end of the hallway.

“You not panicking anymore?”

“No.”

“Then let’s go.”

Halo’s hand shifted from it’s Darryl-like-appearance to the purple-black claws, slicing the lock cleanly off with a *schlink*.

He opened the door for Zak, to reveal a dimly-lit staircase leading downwards.

"After you, mon chere."

=====

Clay walked down the hallway while humming absentmindedly, his mind open to the various mental cacophonies occurring around him.

Ah! There it was, Room C-135. Pretty far from his, Nick's, and George's lab, but oh well. Darryl had sent someone over to say that there was testing stuff stored in there, maybe it'd be helpful with studying Nick's *extremely strange* anatomy.

He opened the door, almost not noticing the lack of light -- some of *Dream's* affinity for darkness would always be in him.

He fumbled around for a lightswitch, not finding any.

The door closed with a *click* behind him.

And it was at that moment, that he knew, that *he'd fucked up*.

Blinding lights erupted all around him, switching on from some unknown place -- he gave a piercing, almost *demonic* screech as the halogen lamps beat down on him.

Harsh radiating light hit him like a tsunami, drowning his senses in white-hot pain.

Clay's knees buckled and he was sent to the floor, body racking with hellish pain.

The light felt like acid on his skin, eating it alive--

He tried to get up, to move, to do anything, but the sheer *amount* of stinging fire he felt was enough to debilitate him completely.

He whimpered in pain-- he reached out with his mind in a last-ditch attempt.

Through the chaos, through the pain, through the torture, he found George. The familiar weight of George's consciousness was a warm comfort in the midst of hell.

He could just barely reach him--

G-geo-rge..!

He slumped, no longer trying to move.

How much longer could he take it?

Clay?

H-help-

Clay-- OH MY GOD! WHAT'S HAPPENING?!

M-make it s-stop... P-please...

Clay couldn't hold onto it any longer, his mind numbed and dulled with the splitting pain on his skin.

There was a ringing in his ears, it grew and grew and grew--

And he felt and saw nothing more.

Events Log Twenty-Five

Nick tried desperately to pat out the flames on his ‘*supposedly fireproof*’ shirt, to no avail.

George watched the chaotic scene, bemused.

“Why wont this *stupid fire*--” he shouted, slapping his own shoulder rather hard, “Go OUT?”

He gave up, standing in unamused annoyance as the rest of his shirt smoldered on. “Good lord, if this keeps happening I will *throw hands*... George, any ideas--”

He saw his friend freeze.

Even through his flickers, Nick could see George pale in fear.

“...George?”

George’s eyes flashed, meeting Nick’s own.

“Clay’s in trouble! W-we have to help!”

“Wai-- what?! How?” Nick said as George started to pace, “Slow down, talk to me.”

“*There’s no time!*” George shouted, lashing out with his hands and pulling at his hair. “Nick, where is he?!”

“Ok ok--” Nick’s eyes widened, “I think he was heading towards a C-room. C... 135!”

All the color that was left in George’s face drained in that moment.

He promptly turned around and walked through the wall, passing straight through.

“George!” Nick yelled after him, “Wait up! Where are you *going*?”

Nick sprinted out of the room, making the long run to the far end of the C-hall.

125... 127... 133...

135!

Nick pulled on the handle.

It was locked.

“*No you don’t, son of a bitch,*” He spat, throwing his shoulder against the wooden door.

It didn’t budge.

Again!

Nothing.

He was starting to get *really* angry now. And scared.

Nick felt his core hum with power, sensing his veins flow with heat and strength.

I have to get to him.

He yelled in rage, slamming his full strength into the door, which finally gave way.

Even compared to the sterily-lit hallway, the room was *bright*. George was already in the room -- phased right through the door.

Nick's eyes landed on two figures on the floor.

He rushed over to George, who was hunched over a fallen Clay--

Whose skin was slightly steaming.

George tried to hold onto Clay, only to fail as his fingers passed through effortlessly.

His eyes darted to Nick's frantically, "It's the lights," he stammered, his translucent hands trembling.

Nick gasped, "*Shit!*"

Nick remembered suddenly how Dream-- no, Clay-- had reacted when exposed to bright lights. He rushed to the wall, trying to find the lightswitch.

"Hurry!" George pleaded, tears starting to fall.

"I'm trying!" Nick shouted, "It's not *there!*"

George's voice broke, choking back a sob. "What do we do?!"

Nick had an idea.

A brilliant, dumb-ass idea.

"George, do the thing!"

"What thing?!"

"The static thing!" He shouted frantically, "Try your electric powers! Short circuit the lights!"

George stood shakily, raising his hand towards the offending lights. He closed his tearful eyes in concentration -- a small spark leapt from his fingers.

"I can't!" George cried, sobbing.

“Just try!” Nick screamed.

Clay’s breathing was starting to become labored, wisps of steam curled off his skin.

George looked down in horror, and stared back up at the ceiling.

He cried and clenched his hands, trying again-- tears flowing freely from his eyes. A slightly-bigger spark arced from his fingertips, but hardly enough.

George grimaced in concentration.

He let out a furious scream -- a shot of pure lightning discharged from his hand, hitting the lights with enough force to send sparks dancing in all directions.

The room plunged into darkness.

The only light in the room came from George’s flickering form and the subtle orange glow from Nick’s lava.

Clay made a pained noise.

George knelt and cradled Clay’s head in his arms, whispering softly.

“You’re going to be ok... you’re gonna be ok... you’re gonna be ok...”

=====

Clay woke slowly and painfully, the dim light of the room still hurting a bit, like touches after a *bad* sunburn.

God, did he feel like shit.

“G-george?” He croaked out, somehow instinctively *knowing* whose hands were buried in his hair.

“Oh my god,” George gasped, “Nick, he’s awake.”

“Hey,” Nick smiled, crouching down beside Clay. “You ok?”

Clay winced, “I think so. What the hell *was* that?”

“You’re still light averse,” Nick frowned, “And I don’t think this was an accident. Some of the lights are kinda harsh in Sites, but not *that* bright, man.”

Clay’s eyes widened at the implications.

“Surely not,” George said quietly, twirling strands of Clay’s hair mindlessly around his fingers. “Who would do that?”

Clay groaned as he tried to sit up. “What time is it? How long was I out?”

“You’re the only one here who can actually *wear* a watch,” Nick pointed out, to which Clay smiled weakly and looked down at his wrist.

“Only fifteen minutes,” He sighed, “Thank the stars, we have a report to file.”

“Clay, what the fuck.” Nick laughed incredulously, “You just got *attacked*, and you can only think about that stupid report?!”

“Well yeah,” Clay shrugged, using the nearby counter as leverage to stand, “If we don’t have that thing in by sundown, he’ll have our asses for lunch.”

George grumbled his begrudging agreement.

(An hour later...)

Clay’s body *ached* from light exposure as he walked down the hallway with George and Nick.

He just wanted to rest -- lie down, close his eyes. But *nooooo*. Scott just *had* to have that report ASAP... and so, here he was. Hobbling to the MRI unit with Nick and George tagging along.

“Dude,” Nick sighed, “Take a break. You were like, steaming or something.” He swatted out a small flame that had started in his hair.

“Look, I don’t *care*-- ” He said, tripping over his shoes and falling to the tiled floor.

“Clay!” George exclaimed, running up to the man on the floor to help him up. He held Clay for a few seconds, before he phased through once more.

“I’m ok,” Clay laughed, starting his wheezing again.

“No,” Nick sighed, “You’re not! This is exactly my point!”

Clay’s glowing eyes bored into Nick, “Like I said. *I. Am. Fine.* ”

He picked himself off the floor. “So stop hounding me *SapNap*-- ”

“Ok then, *Dream*, ” Nick retorted.

“Y’know,” Clay smiled, “I like the nickname, Dream.”

George tilted his head in curiosity.

“It has a ring to it,” He continued, “It makes sense, I guess, I do kinda have powers over sleep, illusion, that type stuff.”

“Wait, what do you mean *illusion*, ” Nick said slowly, “Clay, what- *AH!*”

“What?!” George asked.

Clay suppressed a smirk.

“T-there w-was a giant s-spider--” He stuttered, “R-right *there*, ”

“I don’t see a giant spider,” Clay grinned, “Nick, maybe you should get more sleep.”

“Clay you *know* I’m arachnophobic,” Nick spat, “What the hell was *that* for?”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.” He grinned.

“Clay...” George frowned, hitting his arm lightly, “Don’t do that -- not on us, at least.”

Clay giggled and swatted back at George, who managed to phase right through Clay’s hand.

Nick was still a little pale. He shivered, shaking off the aftertraces of adrenaline. “C’mon guys, we have an MRI to get to.”

=====

Halo and Zak stepped into the stairwell, Halo closed the door behind them.

Zak jumped when the door clicked shut -- squeezing anxiety gripped his heart with the sound.

“*Calm yourself*,” Halo sighed, putting a hand on Zak’s shoulder and leaning on him as he shifted back to his more *demonic* form with a shudder. “*I just don’t want anyone seeing us.*”

Zak nodded. The stairwell was dim enough so that the light from Halo’s eyes actually improved visibility.

There was a number stencilled on the painted cinder blockcinderblock wall by the door -- *SL1*.

“*There’s only one way to go*,” Halo wrinkled his nose, “*And unfortunately that is downward.*”

“By all means, you first,” Zak gestured in front of him. Halo rolled his eyes (or at least did a very similar motion).

“*I suppose*,” He replied, starting the descentdecent down into the darkness.

“Wait,” Zak shivered at a sudden chill, “I don’t want to be last.”

“*Watched one too many horror movies?*” Halo smirked, waiting for Zak to catch up to him before continuing on side-by-side.

“You get more scared than I do,” Zak remarked, but paused. “Well, *used* to.”

Halo frowned, “*I remember.*”

Zak looked up curiously, almost missing a step. “Remember what?”

“All our old movie nights,” Halo smiled sadly, *“How you’d always make popcorn and I-- he’d always spill it at a jumpscare.”*

“You share memories?” Zak raised an eyebrow.

Halo nodded, *“Y-yes. I wouldn’t have, but for some reason he... wants me to know. He shared his memory with me, willingly.”*

Zak’s mind reeled.

What exactly did all this mean?

Why had Darryl *wanted* Halo to know everything?

They hit a landing, another stencil could be read by another door. *SL2.*

“Sublevel Two, I’m guessing?” Zak said, walking up to the door.

“Your guess is as good as mine,” Halo shrugged.

Zak pulled on the handle, and curiously it was unlocked. And if he’d thought that the lighting was poor in the stairwell, it paled in comparison to the impenetrable dark that was beyond the door.

“Aaaaaaand I’m starting to get horror movie vibes.” Zak groaned, burying a hand in his hair. “Goddamnit.”

“Language.” Halo frowned, then shrugged. *“And I doubt anything in there is worse than the company you already keep.”*

Zak nodded, the objectively true information absolutely no help at all.

“Screw it,” He said, switching on a flashlight he’d stowed in the pockets of his hoodie. “If there are any *other* demons in here, I’m here for the taking!”

“Keep your voice down,” Halo hissed, his eyes illuminating the space a few feet in front of him.

Zak’s flashlight scanned over the new hallway. This floor seemed to mirror the one above, with a long, drawn-out hallway seeming to lead to another larger control room, Zak guessed. He couldn’t tell, the darkness swallowed up everything.

They walked a few paces into the hallway, extra light from the stairwell spilling into the inky depths. It wasn’t much, but it was something.

“Hey, we should start looking for--”

Thud!

The door closed behind them.

“Halo?” Zak hissed, his whole body freezing as the hall was plunged into absolute darkness.
“Halo I don’t like this--”

“I’m still here,” Halo whispered, his hand finding Zak’s arm in the dark.

How the hell did that actually make Zak feel better?

“Thank muffin,” Zak sighed quietly, “If you’d just disappeared...”

“Well I didn’t,” Halo muttered, *“So there’s no use working yourself up about something that didn’t happen.”*

Zak nodded in the dark.

“I’m going to keep my hand on your arm, I know you can’t see in the dark like I can.” Halo said gently. Was that... was that pity? Or was it sympathy?

He’d probably deny both.

“T-thanks,” Zak mumbled, as Halo gently tugged him back towards the door. Zak could see his eyes in the dark, lighting up a small bubble around the two.

“Halo, I have played way too much FNAF for this,” Zak said, his breathing starting to become shallow again.

Halo got to the door, jiggling the handle. *“Locked.”*

“Oh shit. Oh-shit-oh-shit- *oh-shit* --”

His words were muffled, Halo pulled Zak against him suddenly, using a free hand to press Zak’s head into Halo’s shoulder.

“Shhh. Breathe.” He said softly, bringing his other hand from Zak’s elbow to his back. *“I’ll get us out of here.”*

Should Zak struggle? Get out of his grasp?

Or should he let his *enemy*, the literal demon possessing his *boyfriend*, comfort him?

“I know you hate the dark,” Halo murmured, his hand rubbing up and down Zak’s back.

He was right, of course. What, with all Darryl’s memories.

The first time they’d done a movie night, they’d chosen *A Quiet Place*. Zak had been terrified before the movie even started, especially since Darryl wasn’t quite... known for being impersonal when it came to physical affection.

Naturally, they’d ended up cuddled against each other by twenty minutes. And if the movie wasn’t scaring the shit out of Zak, it was the distinct possibility that his heart would just stop beating altogether.

And then *it* happened.

About an hour into the movie, one of the monsters dropped down into the grain silo with Regan -- scaring the absolute *daylights* out of Zak.

And then *it* happened.

Not but two seconds after he jumped out of his skin, the power cut out. Leaving him and Darryl in the complete dark at about 1AM.

And of course, he'd panicked. *Badly*. Darryl had spent hours with him (way later than he was supposed to stay over), just making sure he was alright.

"As long as you're with me, you're safe."

"You sure you still don't hate me?" Zak mumbled, half muffled.

Halo grumbled, squeezing the ravenette a little tighter. *"I still don't like you. I just don't want to see you... like that."*

Zak finally reciprocated Halo's hold, balling his fists in the lab coat he had on. He screwed his eyes shut and buried his head in Halo's shoulder.

If I can't see it, I won't be as scared of it.

"Skeppy," Halo's voice brought him back, *"As much I enj-- appreciate this, I need to get us out of here."*

Zak nodded against Halo's shoulder. Slowly, Halo let go, turning his focus instead to the lock. He slashed his claws against the door.

Nothing.

"Muffins," Halo cursed, glancing back at Zak's worried eyes.

As soon as he went back to the lock, Zak whirled the flashlight's gaze back to the hallway.

Something was convincing the boy that *something* was watching them.

If he'd learned anything from his time at the Foundation, he knew.

One is never alone.

Events Log Twenty-Six

The flashlight was shaking alongside Zak's hands. Every second they spent *stuck* in this place made the boy even more anxious.

"Anything?" Zak's voice broke as he asked.

Halo gave an irritated sigh. "*Nothing. This lock is nothing like the one on the first floor.*"

"H-hurry," Zak whispered, starting to feel his fingertips go a little numb from white-knuckling the flashlight.

"*I'm trying,*" Halo hissed, slashing at the lock again with a painfully loud clang in the heavy silence.

"Have you tried picking it yet?" Zak muttered over his shoulder, keeping his eyes glued on the dark hallway.

"No," Halo said, "*I wonder if the door is airtight,*"

"Why?"

"*I can get through it if its not airtight,*" Halo said, "*I can go get help.*"

"No way in *hell* are you doing that," Zak spat, "You are *not* leaving me here alone!"

Halo's shoulders slumped, "*Yeah, you're right. I can't leave you alone.*"

Zak tugged at his hair, backing up against the wall by the door and sinking to the floor.

"We're never going to get out of here."

Halo leaned up against the door, sitting as well. "*Well, the door is airtight anyway. I can't get out.*"

Something moved.

Just out of the flashlight's reach.

"Halo--" he hissed, gripping *hard* onto Halo's hand on the floor.

"*What?*" he said, "*What happened?*"

"Something." Zak breathed, "Moved."

Halo drew in a sharp breath. "*Are you sure?*"

Zak nodded, fixing his gaze on Halo's glowing eyes.

“Turn off the flashlight.”

“What--”

“Trust me.” Halo shifted in his seat, looping an arm around Zak’s shoulders. *“I’m so sorry.”*

Zak’s eyes were as wide as they would go, trying to use every fiber of his being to see into the impenetrable dark.

Crash!

The unmistakable sound of *something* tipping *something else* over.

Halo’s hand tightened on Zak’s shoulder, leaning over to press a finger against Zak’s lips.

And then they saw the eyes.

Two glowing white eyes.

The *thing* snarled, a primordial growl that gurgled and bubbled.

Zak, like a fool, turned the flashlight on.

“Zak no--”

Too late.

The *thing* before them would burn itself into Zak’s mind forever.

He’d binged *Stranger Things* with Darryl a while ago -- and strangely, this *creature* looked like a dull brown demogorgon, but with a regular lizard face structure with *glowing* eyes, and what looked like sinewy bandages around its snout.

Something black dripped from its jaws, when it hit the floor the tile started to dissolve.

When the light hit it it hissed, and rushed forward, Halo and Zak scrambled to get away from it.

It crashed into the door, right where Halo had been. It turned with a snarl, sending drops of black acid spraying in every direction.

“Zak! Get behind me!” Halo shouted, grabbing Zak’s arm and pulling him behind him.

It from all fours, towering well over Halo.

The creature lunged, swiping at Halo. He ducked, the thing’s claws hitting a nearby shelf against the wall instead.

One of the metal beams holding the shelf up was sliced cleanly in half.

Halo dived to the side as it lunged again, managing to kick it in the head as he fell to the floor.

The thing was completely focused on Halo, his eyes making him more visible.

Halo scrambled backwards, but the hallway wall met his back all too soon.

The creature tensed, ready to spring--

That's when Zak realized, *this wasn't just Halo.*

It was Darryl too.

"Hey shit-face!" Zak shouted, grabbing a piece of the metal shelf-bar in one hand and the flashlight in the other. "Over here, ass-clown!"

"Zak!" Halo shouted as the *thing* turned to face Zak, "*What in the muffin are you doing?!*"

"Saving you, dumbass!" Zak shouted, as the creature started to advance on Zak, on all-fours again.

"Skeppy no!"

The creature struck out, and Zak threw up the metal bar to meet its claws.

The bar was sliced again, only an inch above where his hand was.

"Wait, *shit--*"

He dropped his former weapon, starting to walk backwards.

Black acid foamed and dripped from its jaws.

That's when Zak looked behind the demogorgon creature, seeing that Halo was injured, he couldn't stand on one leg.

The creature jumped at him--

He brought up his arm in defence, *what good would that do--*

CLANG!

The creature screeched in pain, recoiling.

Zak had his eyes screwed shut, prepared for death.

Why wasn't he dead?

He opened his eyes.

"What the hell?"

His left arm, the one he'd used in defence, that sleeve was completely shredded up to the elbow.

And his forearm had diamonds sprouting out of it, all along the back of his forearm in jagged spikes.

Slowly, he watched as the diamonds re-absorbed back into his skin, leaving him with just the little cluster that always appeared on the back of his hand.

The creature was backed up against the door, looking at Zak with genuine fear.

Zak looked at its jaws again, taking note of the dripping acid.

If Halo's claw things wouldn't work on the lock...

What about acid?"

"Halo, we need to knock this thing the heck out," Zak shouted, rushing over while the monster was still dazed. He pulled Halo to his feet, well, foot.

He leaned back up against the wall, not standing on his right leg.

The creature shook its head as if to clear it.

"Maybe we don't have to--" Halo said, "I'm going to pull the rest of that shelf onto it."

Zak nodded, starting back towards the creature again.

It growled defiantly, trying to make itself look as big as possible.

"What, you scared?" Zak laughed, his survival instinct gone again. "You gonna piss your pants? You a little pissbaby?"

While it was focusing on Zak, Halo had hobbled over to the shelf.

"You going to cry? Huh?" Zak watched Halo out of the corner of his eye.

"Zak now!"

He launched out of the way, as the heavy metal bookcase crashed on top of where he'd been standing, as well as the creature. It screeched -- desperately trying to get out, to no avail. It was pinned.

A pool of acid was starting to form around its jaws.

"Look for something to collect the spit!" Zak said, searching the area.

"What about this?" He picked up a partially-shattered ceramic mug, most of it was still intact. It had *"#1 Researcher"* on it.

Zak grabbed it from Halo's hand, scraping a little from the shallow pool of black.

Before the acid could eat up the mug, he threw the contents onto the lock on the door.

It started fizzling, then melting, then it gave way completely.

“Yes!” Halo smiled, leaning on Zak’s arm for support. “*Skeppy I could kiss you right now!*”

Zak didn’t really process this, the mixture of adrenaline in his bloodstream at *way* too high a level for him to even notice Halo’s words.

“Let’s get out of here!” Zak grinned, wrapping his arm around Halo’s waist for him to walk a little better. They rushed out the door, and hurriedly closed it behind them.

“*Holy muffins,*” Halo inhaled, leaning against the door, “*that was intense.*”

Zak looked down, his hands were trembling.

“Y-yeah,” He sighed, extending his hand to Halo. “What was that thing?”

Halo took Zak’s hand, allowing himself to be pulled upright. Unfortunately Zak used a little *too* much force, causing him to topple over on the boy.

“Woah--” Zak laughed, catching Halo before he could fall. “Careful there.”

“*T-thanks,*” He said.

“Ok, now that we’ve battled a demogorgon thing together,” Zak giggled, “*Now* will you admit you like me?”

“*N-no.*” Halo smirked, enjoying the frustration on Zak’s face.

“I guess I’ll have to try harder then,” Zak responded, turning Halo’s own line against him.

If it was possible for a shadow demon to blush, it would have happened there.

“*Let’s just get back to the lab.*” Halo smiled softly, looping an arm around Zak’s shoulders as they struggled to climb the stairs back up.

“*And Zak,*” Halo said when they were halfway up.

“Yeah?” Zak grinned.

“*For heaven's sake, language.*”

Events Log Twenty-Seven

Zak pushed the 1st-floor door open with his hips, as it was still unlocked.

Halo gave him a grateful glance, and they hobbled together back towards their lab.

It wasn't too short of a walk luckily, and they made it back to the room without anyone stopping them.

"You're back!" Purpled smiled, turning off his phone (which he had been staring at quite fixedly). "Did you get the headsets?"

"The muffining headsets!" Halo groaned, face-palming himself.

"I knew we forgot something," Zak giggled, "Sorry Purpled, we were just too preoccupied fighting off a giant acid demogorgon to notice--"

"Wait. *What?!"*

Halo nodded, *"Yep. Second sublevel was deserted. Well, deserted by the Foundation."*

Purpled's eyes were wide as he pulled over a chair for Halo. Zak pulled himself up onto a counter. Purpled looked over Halo's leg.

"Looks like you sprained your knee," Purpled said, "Basically you just bent it the wrong way, but not enough to hyperextend."

"Well whoop-de-do." Halo grumbled, *"I guess I'll have to hobble around everywhere."*

"I'll get you a brace, you'll be fine." Purpled reassured him, "But for God's sake, tell me what happened!"

"OK so first off, Halo hit the lock and it broke," Zak started, swinging his legs. "And there was this kinda dark staircase, there were letters and stuff painted on the wall."

"We think they mean Sublevel one, two. Etc." Halo added.

"Yeah. We went down a flight, and there was a door by Sublevel Two." Zak ran a hand through his hair, fishing in his pocket for something. "Damn it. Glasses are broken."

"Language." Halo sighed, *"So we went in the door. It was pitch black, Zak got out a flashlight. We went a little way into the hall, and the door shut behind us."*

"That's how the horror movie starts," Purpled laughed. "Wait Zak, why is your left sleeve gone?"

"Long story." Zak smiled, "But anyways, the door shut, I started panicking. The door was airtight, Halo couldn't get out. So we're stuck in a pitch black hallway with god-knows-

what,”

“Well we actually do know what,” Halo pointed out, “That was when it attacked us.”

“What is *it*?” Purple breathed, obviously really interested.

“You ever seen Stranger Things?”

“Lived it and breathed it for a year straight.”

“I suppose its a valid comparison.” Halo shrugged, “Imagine one of their demogorgons, but brownish-gray. It had a lizard face too, not the flower of death from the show.”

“Flower of death?” Zak snickered.

“What?” Halo frowned.

Only Zak knew that’s what Darryl always used to call it.

“Nothin.”

“So it attacks us,” Halo said, *“And I try to protect Zak.”*

“Thanks for that, by the way.” Zak smiled.

Halo grinned back, not in his usual sadistic way. *“You’re welcome, even if it didn’t really do anything.”*

“What?” Purpled raised an eyebrow.

“So he tries to fight the thing, but it manages to knock him over and injures his leg,” Zak said nonchalantly, “So I’m like, ‘ok, I gotta protect him’.”

“And thank you for that.” Halo said, *“I’d be dead without you.”*

Zak grinned, “So I get its attention,”

“Mhm,” Purpled said, “Continue.”

“And it starts coming at me,” Zak’s eyes glinted mischevously, “And it comes at me, but like, it hits my arm? And then boom! There’s diamonds there!”

“Whaaaaat?” Purpled beamed, “That’s *so cool!*”

“I know, right?” Zak said back. “And it didn’t even hurt me!”

“Can we get back to the matter at hand?”

“Fine…” Zak pouted. “Ok so, after that, I realized that we could tip a shelf on it and trap it.”

“So I push it over,” Halo continued, *“And we ran. Well, limped.”*

“We need to find out what that thing was,” Purpled said, going over to a nearby computer.

Scpnet login

The computer prompted him with a “*Choose File*” search bar. He clicked on a drop-down menu, and selected Appearance.

“What did it look like? Scientifically, I mean.”

“*Quadripedal, brown-grey.*” Halo said. “*Black spit. Acid.*”

Purpled’s fingers flew across the keys, clicking on a file.

“This him?”

file front page

“That’s him.” Zak nodded, “But it’s all redacted.”

“*Level Four.*” Halo muttered, “*Do we know anyone with higher than three?*”

All three of them answered at the same time.

“*Clay!*”

“But that means...”

“We have to tell him what’s going on.” Purpled sighed.

“*Maybe we should,*” Halo shrugged, “*He’d be really helpful.*”

Zak nodded. “Let’s go then. They’re in... Purpled, where are they?”

“B-125.”

=====

"Huh, that's weird..." Clay muttered, he tapped on the screen, wondering if he got a false reading.

He rebooted the machine and tried again to no avail.

"What the heck--" The blond muttered.

"What?" Nick asked.

George peered over at the screen.

"It's either the MRI is broken or-- well, see for yourself." Clay said, still confused.

The high quality Foundation MRI showed almost nothing. It got half a centimeter into Nick's body and stopped. Instead of a regular body, all it displayed was whole black mass.

"Uh, Clay? Maybe I should get out..." Nick said, pointing to the smoldering plastic under his shoulders.

"Oh for heaven's sake," Clay gasped, hitting buttons so that he was slowly rolled out from inside the giant plastic donut. "Can't you stop that from happening?!"

"Not *really*, " Nick grumbled.

"Clay?" George mumbled, looking up at the doctor at the controls.

"Yes, George?" He sighed, not shifting his gaze from the panel.

"Why did you go to that store room again?"

Clay paused, scratching the back of his neck.

"I-- I think an assistant told me someone said there was stuff in there that would be helpful?"

"Clay, who sent the assistant?" Nick said, sitting upright and looking wearily at the slightly molten plastic.

"I remember! It was--"

The door to the MRI lab flew open.

It revealed Zak and Darryl, standing in front of another blond behind them.

"Hey Clay!" Zak said.

George noticed there was something *strange* about Darryl -- he kept a close eye on the boy.

"Hey." Clay responded, not quite smiling and not quite frowning.

"Can we have a minute to talk?" Halo smiles.

George felt Clay's consciousness up against his own.

It's Darryl.

He was the one who told me to go to that room.

What?

He tried to kill you?

I think so.

George shuddered.

When he looked back at Darryl, his eyes widened. One of his hands had shifted to hide behind his back, and in the process had shown black *claws*.

He has claws--!

Fucking hell.

That's Halo.

"Of course you can have a word!" Clay said brightly.

*(His tone, of course, was *very* cap.)*

"Zak would you shut the door?" Clay asked calmly. Zak did, returning to help hold up Halo. He was limping.

What had they gotten up to...

Nick was clueless at the moment, but Clay reached out.

Don't trust Darryl.

It's Halo.

What??? How?

Darryl was the one who sent the assistant.

OH shit.

On the word, I want you to make sure he doesn't escape.

We're getting rid of him once and for all.

Nick stiffened, but didn't show it.

"Thanks," Halo smiled with Darryl's features, "*This is actually really important.*"

"I'm sure it is!" Clay smiled. "Nick, if you would."

Before anyone could blink, Nick shot up and pinned Halo to the wall, forearm against his throat.

"Halo." Clay spat, "Might as well come out."

"...fine."

Pop!

A full-shadow Halo showed himself, horns and all.

“What are you doing?!” Zak said, trying to get Nick off Halo. “Chill!”

“Did you *know* it was Halo?!” Clay looked at Zak in disbelief.

Little sparks started to fly from George’s fingers. Why would anyone want to hurt Clay?

“Yes!” Zak hissed, “And he just saved my life!”

“*I n-need your help,*” Halo choked out, “*That’s why we came.*”

“Is that also why you tried to kill Clay?” George shouted suddenly, causing everyone to turn.

“You did *what?*” Zak said quietly, turning back to Halo. “Halo, what are they talking about?”

“I’ll tell you what he’s talking about,” Nick growled, “He purposefully led Clay into a trap.”

“Halogen lights,” Clay sighed bitterly, “I’m still light-averse. I walked into the room *he* sent me to, and halogen lights switched on. I barely got out with my life.”

George started to flicker more, the sparks intensifying with his anger.

“George had to short out the lights,” Nick hissed, “if he hadn’t, Clay would be *dead.*”

Halo’s eyes were as wide as they’d go, “*I didn’t do any of that!*”

Zak backed away from Halo slowly. “Say you didn’t do it. Just tell me you didn’t have anything to do with this.”

Halo looked Zak in the eye, “*I didn’t do it.*”

Zak glanced back at Clay, “Surely there’s some mistake,”

“Has Halo been... suddenly friendly lately?” Clay said, his sharp mind starting to put together a picture of what had happened.

Zak stuttered, not quite getting an answer out.

“And has he done things to... make you *trust* him?”

Zak stared at Halo, and he barely whispered, “yes.”

“He’s been *lying* to you!” George spat, “He tried to *kill* Clay!”

Zak clapped his hands to his mouth. “N-no. Nonon *nononono* --”

“*Zak!*” Halo sniffed, his voice not angry. “*Listen to me!*”

“Don’t!” Clay spoke over him, “Zak, it’s ok. He manipulated you. Come on, we can kill him, get Darryl back...”

But when Zak saw Halo's eyes, they held real fear.

"Zak!" Clay shouted, extending his hand.

"Please-- I wasn't lying! Darryl, he showed me his memories, he--"

"Shut it." Nick snarled. "You're not manipulating us anymore."

Zak was starting to tear up.

All the things Halo had said, all the things that made Zak think he was trying to be *good*...

They were all just lies?

Just as he'd opened up again.

"Zak," Clay said more calmly, "Come on."

What was he supposed to do?

Zak's eyes flickered back to Halo again.

And oh, how he wished he hadn't.

Halo was smiling. Not in the maniacal way Zak was used to, but a softer, kinder, *sadder* smile.

His eyes pulsed to deep green for just an instant.

He mouthed something to Zak.

"I love you."

Events Log Twenty-Eight

"I love you."

And Zak knew that he wasn't lying.

"No, Clay," Zak murmured, "There's something wrong."

"Something wrong?" He laughed mirthlessly, "Like perhaps being manipulated by a shadow demon?"

Zak shook his head, "No, just hear him-- no, *us*-- out."

Clay furrowed his brows, thinking for a moment.

"Fine." Clay sighed bitterly, "Nick, let him go."

Nick backed off, and Halo gasped for breath. Zak caught him and held him upright -- to which Halo muttered a grateful something in his ear.

"What do you have to say that's just *so* important?" Clay asked, crossing his arms.

"It couldn't have been Halo." Zak said matter-of-factly, "I've been with him since we arrived at Site 05-Major. I've been with him. *The. Whole. Time.*"

Nick glanced back at Clay. "But if he--"

"Are you *sure*?" Clay said quietly, directing the full force of his words towards Zak.

"I am sure." Zak replied coolly.

"Thank you." Halo whispered.

Clay backed down a bit. "I still don't trust him."

"Neither do I," George said quietly, phasing back to full opacity and placing his hand gently on Clay's arm. "But we have to give him a chance."

"Well then who the heck would want to frame Halo, who would even *know* about Halo." Nick pointed out, swatting out a flame in his hair.

"I might have some insight on that," Said a voice (*that everyone had completely forgotten about*). It was Purpled, of course.

He had with him the briefcase, the one that contained the files on Project DeVries. "If you'd like to take a look at this."

“You again?” Nick sighed, “Don’t make me punch you.”

Zak stepped in, “It’s ok, he’s Foundation.”

George raised an eyebrow. “Where’s the limp from?”

“That’s why we came to you,” Halo sighed, *“We need Clay’s clearance.”*

“Why?” Clay leaned forward a little, “What do you know?”

“Purpled,” Zak frowned, “Show them the files.”

He did as told, setting the briefcase down on a counter and unlocking it.

The laptop was inside there too, when Purpled opened it, the SCP Report for Animus was already up.

“It’s redacted,” Zak explained, “And we saw... that *thing*... downstairs on Sublevel Two.”

“There’s a Sublevel Two?” Clay raised an eyebrow.

“From what I remember,” Halo said, lightly touching the spot on his neck that Nick had had a grip on -- it was slightly burned. *“There’s at least three. Maybe more.”*

“And you saw this SCP down there?” George added, “Clay, they might be lying, but we need to find out if they are or not.”

“Why were you even down there?” Nick asked, asking the obvious.

Purpled smiled, “Well they were just looking for VR headsets in the first place,”

“What?” Clay’s head snapped up from the file he was reading. “Why?”

“Next file.” Halo said, *“The one under that one.”*

Clay picked up the one Halo pointed out, the one that had the VR headset blueprint on it.

“Project DeVries...” Nick whispered, peering over Clay’s shoulder. “That’s the thing that Eret was working on!”

Clay nodded, “But I still don’t trust them.” He was, of course, referring to Halo, Zak, and Purpled.

Zak crossed his arms. “Purpled snuck them out.”

Nick looked up as well, “Clay, do the clearance thing.”

“Why would I?” Clay said, stubborn.

“If you don’t believe us,” Halo replied, *“I’ll be happy to show you where we went.”*

Clay shuddered a bit, “No, thank you. Purpled, give me that laptop.”

He obliged, and Clay signed in. “SCP-5349?”

Zak nodded.

“Holy shit...” Clay whispered, and Nick (peeking from behind) gasped.

Halo *really* wanted to say ‘language’, but he didn’t feel like it would help the situation.

“What is it?” Zak said, “Clay, what?”

“Look.” Clay breathed, swiveling the computer around in his hands.

insert report

Zak almost couldn’t believe his eyes.

“DeVries was a Foundation Project before it was ever Insurgency.” Zak murmured, “And the creature was just another Hybrid.”

“Wait, look,” Nick said, pointing to familiar names. “Scott and Eret worked on this *together*.”

“Maybe that’s why Eret went Insurgency,” Zak thought out loud, “Foundation wouldn’t let him finish DeVries.”

“But he *did*,” Clay was clenching and unclenching his fists, “*Right* under their noses. Hell, right under *my* nose.”

Purpled frowned -- but then suddenly looked up as if he’d had an epiphany. “Wait, go back to the Insurgency file. The one about Step One.”

Halo picked up the file, handed it to Clay. “*Purpled, what are you thinking?*”

“Look,” Purpled pointed to the blacked-out agent’s name.

Agent S.

“Now,” Purpled continued, pointing to a name on the Experiment Report. “Line it up.”

“No...” Halo murmured, “*T-this just isn’t possible.*”

“We need to talk to Eret,” Nick said.

Clay nodded, looking back at George. “I swear we’ll get your memories back.”

George nodded.

“*Do you trust us now?*” Halo deadpanned, fiddling with his lab-coat. “*I-- Oh goodness, this is hard.*”

Zak raised an eyebrow, placing a hand on Halo's shoulder.

"I feel like I should apologize."

"Well no shit, Sherlock," Nick laughed. Halo sent a withering gaze his way, but continued.

"I understand that you can't trust me, not really. If it helps, Darryl trusts me."

"What?" Clay asked, "How on *earth* does he trust you?"

Pop!

"H-hey," Darryl managed to get out before his knees gave out.

"Darryl!" Zak gasped happily, rushing to catch him.

"Are you ok?!" Nick said, "Did he hurt you?"

Darryl shook his head, leaning on Zak. "Halo... he's not just SCP-3812 anymore."

"What?" Zak muttered, "Darryl, what do you mean?!"

"I'm sorry..." He smiled weakly, nuzzling his head into the crook of Zak's neck. "I had to. It was the only way."

"Only way to *what*?" Zak said again, "Darryl, what have you done?"

He sighed happily, wrapping his arms around Zak's shoulders. "It was the only way to get him to not hurt anyone."

"Still not answering the question, muffin," Zak said softly, rooting his hand in Darryl's hair.

"Halo told you about the memories..." Darryl murmured, "Well... it wasn't just memories."

Zak pulled back to look him in the eye, "Darryl, what are you talking about?"

"Well..." Darryl smiled sheepishly, "If I hadn't... he'd probably still be trying to kill you..."

"Darryl."

"Sorry!" He giggled.

Why was he so happy?

"I kind of... shared my whole *self* with him." Darryl finished.

"Darryl, what the fuck." Nick cursed, "Why would you *do* that?"

"Language!" Darryl frowned. "We're kind of... merging?"

The whole group took in a breath.

“What?!”

“It started when I shared my memories with him,” Darryl explained as Zak hugged him harder, “back at the Insurgency. Right before the breakout.”

“Did you...” Zak whispered, “Did you see... everything...”

Darryl nodded.

“Oh.”

Darryl’s smile disappeared, “I’m so *sorry*, ”

“I-it’s okay,” Zak sniffed, cupping Darryl’s cheeks in his hands.

“I’m just glad *you’re* ok,” Darryl smiled, “A-and, *he* is *very* sorry.”

“S-so the longer you shared your mind with him,” Zak said, slightly confused, “The more you two are... connected?”

“Mhm.” Darryl sighed, putting his head back on Zak’s shoulder, “I don’t think we could separate now if we wanted to.”

Zak wanted to cry, he really did.

He just didn’t have it in him.

“It’s really ok,” Darryl reassured him, “I think he’s ready to just... rest.”

“And what the heck does *that* mean?”

“It’s going to be *me*, just *me*, by the end of this. But, with some ‘ *exposure mutations* ’.”

Zak laughed a little. “I can’t wait.”

Darryl (*forgetting completely about everyone else*) softly brought his lips to Zak’s for a moment, trying to be as close to the other as possible.

Everyone respectfully turned away, of course.

Darryl broke the embrace, resting his forehead on Zak’s.

“My love, I’ll see you on the other side.”

Supplementary Log

“Hey, Eret.”

“Sir.”

“Progress?”

“...Slow.”

“And why, pray tell, is that?”

“Sir, I can’t do this on my own, back then I had staff, D-Classes, a real lab for God’s sake,”

“Say no more.”

“What?”

“I think I know how to get you the help you need, without them knowing.”

“Sir?”

The man handed Eret a file.

“Clay?”

The man nodded.

“He’s very bright, are you sure he wouldn’t catch on right away?”

“For someone so intelligent, he’s very stupid.”

Eret laughed, “Intelligence is as intelligence does.”

“He will serve you well.”

“But how, sir?”

“The boy takes everything I say like it’s law. Which I guess it is. I can invent a reason.”

“What about the volunteer program?”

The man paused, thought, decided.

“...yes. That will do. You’ll be reassigned in the morning.”

“Sir--”

“Project DeVries MUST continue. No one else but us understands.”

“Yessir.”

“...And I have a special Subject for you.”

“Who?”

“You’ll find out in time. He’s been selected very carefully. If you play your cards right...”

“Sir?”

The man stayed silent.

Eret began to get nervous.

“Sir, if I’m found out--”

“I don’t care how, don’t get caught.”

“...ok.”

The man slid another file across the desk.

It read:

Step Two

Eret paused, “...I thought this was banned.”

“This is beyond the Foundation now.”

“It might not work on Anderson.”

“Why not?”

“His mind... it’s unlike any we’ve ever seen.”

Eret grumbled, “No wonder Illumina hates him so much.”

“Illumina is a glorified grunt.” the man brushed it off, “Listen, but do not hear what he says.”

Eret didn’t really know what he meant by that, but didn’t question.

“This file, protect it with your life. It’s the only un-redacted one that exists.”

“Yessir.”

“Can you follow it?”

Eret looked at the papers again.

He had grey morals, sure...

But this made him a little queasy.

“I said, can you follow it?”

Eret swallowed his fears.

“Yessir.”

Chapter 30

Halo, Zak, Clay, George, Purpled, and Nick all headed back to C-114 after a few more hours of testing. Tedium, to the highest level.

The tension in the air could have been cut with a knife.

Zak looked perpetually on the verge of tears, George was continually confused, and Halo just looked like he regretted existing.

Upon reaching the labs, they settled into vague groups.

Clay kept his eye on Halo.

So he saw it when Halo tried to reach for Zak's hand. And he saw when Zak jerked away, pinning Halo with a death stare.

Ouch.

"We *really* need to finish the reports," Purpled sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose.

"Why though?" Zak said bitterly, "If we're right, we really shouldn't be giving *anything* to Scott."

"Unless," Nick said suddenly, pointing to the briefcase Purpled carried. "The trapper's traps can trap the trapper."

"Excuse me *what*?" Clay laughed, "Nick, what are you talking about."

"Well, we're assuming he's going to uh, *pass these on*." He pointed to the half-typed reports. "If he tries to, we know we're right. If he doesn't, we might be wrong."

"But how..." Clay muttered, before his eyes landed on Purpled again. "Oh! The undercover agent."

Purpled looked up in surprise. "I'm already a double agent, I think. It's already confusing, don't make it any more so."

"*Too bad*," Halo snarked, "*You were the one to help me knock out Techno. Are you on our side or not?*"

"What are you talking about, *our* side?" George remarked, breaking his silence. "I'm still not convinced you didn't try and kill Clay."

Halo retreated back into silence.

"This isn't helping anything," Nick sighed, "We can fight each other later. But there's something bigger at play here. Truce for now, ok?"

There were grumblings of agreement.

Knock knock.

“Hey,” someone said, opening the door.

Purpled, out of instinct, hid the briefcase of files under a counter.

And boy, was everyone glad he did.

“How is everyone?” Scot smiled, his teal hair poking out from behind the door. “Oh! *Everyone’s* here!”

Everyone *froze*.

His eyes landed on Purpled, and he raised an eyebrow. “Why are you here?”

“They saw me in the hallway, and recognized me from the Insurgency,” Purpled lied quickly, “I wanted to make sure they knew I was Foundation. Lost track of time. Sorry, sir.”

“All good,” Scott waved his hand, “As long as you’re not spilling state secrets.”

Purpled laughed nervously.

“Just popping in to let you know that you have another day on those reports,” He said, and everyone slumped in relief. “No use rushing science, I want them to be accurate and *detailed*. ”

“Yessir.” Clay forced a warm smile on his lips. His hands fiddled with the lab coat that was hiding the worst of the burns on his arms. The fabric scratched, and it burned like *hell*.

“Good! I’ll check in in the morning.” He said, “You guys might want to go to sleep. Do you have any idea how late it is?”

Purpled quickly glanced down at his watch in alarm, eyes widening.

“Don’t want insomniatic researchers,” Scott laughed, “You’re still in the same rooms as last night, no?”

Zak glanced at Halo (who was camouflaged as Darryl), apprehension clear in his eyes.

“Yessir!” Nick said, filling the uneasy silence.

“I’ll leave you to it,” He grinned, leaving again.

“*Phew*, ” Halo sighed as everyone let out the breath they didn’t know they were holding. He slumped a little in relief as the horns came back, like he was releasing tension.

“You heard the man,” Clay muttered, cleaning up stray papers and grouping them into manila files. “Rest up for tomorrow. We’re going to need it.”

Nick headed out, careful not to touch anything.

Next was Purpled, leaving the briefcase where it was hidden.

And then Clay, with George holding onto his arm.

Leaving Zak and Halo.

“Wait, Zak,” Halo said quickly before the diamond boy could run, *“Look I know seeing Darryl again made you hate me--”*

“Of COURSE it did!” Zak spat, turning on his heel. Halo shrunk back a little. “You *took him away from me!*”

“I-it’s not like that, I--”

“Save it, Halo!” He said, turning to leave again.

“Zak please--”

“Get *away* from me!” He shouted, snarling the words. “I thought you were-- nevermind! Either get the fuck *away from me* or just...”

“J-just what?”

Zak’s shoulders slumped, his tone quieted. “I just want Darryl back.”

Of course.

He wants Darryl.

Why would he...

Nevermind.

Halo, if it was possible, his expression changed to even more defeated.

Why did I even try to be good.

Pop!

And just like that, Darryl was back.

“Darryl!” Zak gasped, rushing forward.

“Hey Geppy,” He mumbled, stumbling a little bit. “Gosh, that always makes me dizzy.”

“Are you ok?” He said, cupping Darryl’s cheek in one hand.

“I’m fine,” He frowned, “But...”

“But what?”

“..nevermind.”

Skeppy furrowed his brows, wrapping his arm around the taller’s waist. “Ok.”

=====

Clay and George were back in their room, already settling down for the night.

“Hey George?” Clay sighed.

“Hm?” He padded out of the bathroom, yawning.

Seeing George like this... it hurt.

Before Clay could think better of his plan, he blurted out, “I think I have a memory that could break the amnesia.”

George’s eyes widened in the warm lamplight. “Really?”

Clay nodded.

He was *so* nervous.

Clay gestured for George to sit on the bed with him, which he did. He placed his hands back on George’s temples.

If this didn’t work...

No. It has to.

Supplementary Log: Memories

<“Goddamnit George!”>

<“Remember me!”>

=====

If butterflies could have a rave, they'd be having it in Clay's stomach.

Nick, why did you have to tell me about Darryl's movie nights with that one dude...

It was all Nick's idea, of course. He'd never actually met George, but heard enough about him from Clay.

“Why don't you just do a movie night, like Darryl?” he'd said, “Nothing brings a couple together like a scary movie...”

There was only one problem.

Something that Clay would *never ever* admit.

He got jumpscared. *Really* easily.

“Nick that's not a good idea,” Clay had said.

“Why?” Nick had responded.

“N-nevermind.”

Clay sighed, checking his watch.

Almost midnight.

Why the hell did I schedule this so late?

No turning back now, he guessed.

Knock knock.

Clay jumped up from the couch, running to the door that separated his room from his neighbor's.

He opened it, quite forgetting just how far down he had to look to meet George's eyes.

“H-hey,” George smiled, already in pajamas. “Was I not supposed to..?”

“Nono--” Clay replied, gesturing at his own sweatpants and tank top. “You're good.”

“What movie?” George said, following Clay to the cushy couch he had set up in front of a TV.

“Life”, Clay sighed, inwardly cursing himself. “You know, the one based on that incident on the ISS.”

“People still think that’s fiction, don’t they...” George shook his head, plopping down on the couch with a *whoomph*.

Clay gave a wry chuckle, wheezing slightly. “Yeah, it turned out to be a good one too, unlike those other ‘based on a true story’ movies. Took some creative license with it.”

This is going to be the death of me.

“You got snacks?” George smiled, his eyes lighting up.

“Do I *ever*, ” Clay wheezed, dashing off to get a few bowls. “What are ya feeling? Candy shit, popcorn, chips?”

“Popcorn’s a classic,” George giggled, making little grabby hands and reaching for the bowl Clay offered him.

After turning off the already dim lights, he snuggled into the corner of the couch, resting the other two bowls not currently in George’s possession on the nearby coffee table.

“Well this is spooky,” George remarked as the opening credits of *Life* began to roll. The blond let out a sigh he didn’t know he was holding. Perhaps he wasn’t the only one that got scared easily.

But then again, what if George just... was unflappable? He’d known people like that before, as soon as they were expecting the scare, it just didn’t affect them.

Clay, of course, was not one of these people.

The movie, of course, was set on the International Space Station. Clay had picked a movie that wasn’t known for *jump* scares -- but thirty minutes in he was regretting his decision again.

Just knowing that this thing had existed...

“Clay?” George tapped his hand lightly, noticing that it was white-knuckling the half-empty bowl of chips in his hands. “You ok?”

He flinched at the touch, George pulled his hand back.

“No George,” Clay sighed, putting down the bowl and rooting his hands deep in his blond hair. “Y-you’re fine.”

George suddenly understood, reaching for the remote. “We don’t have to watch it if you don’t want to--”

“No,” Clay laughed, snatching his hand away from the remote. “I’m fine, Georgie.”

“Georgie?” He giggled, raising his eyebrows. “Y’know, I like that.”

Thank goodness for the dark, Clay’s cheeks burned deep rose.

The movie played on without them.

Clay’s eyes flitted back to the screen, seeing the SCP tighten its grip on Hugh’s hand--

And then it started twisting.

Oh god...

Clay seriously resisted the urge to just leave the room.

Why did it have to be movies! Nothing in real life scares me!

He forced the lump in his throat down.

A few tension-drenched seconds later--

CRUNCH!

“FUUUUUCK-!” Clay screeched, forgetting everything else and clutching George to him. George had been on the other end of the couch. “*What the HELL was THAT?*”

It took a full five seconds before Clay realized that he was literally hugging George to him.

“Uh...” George choked, “C-can’t really b-breathe...”

“Sorry!” Clay yelped, loosening his grip and releasing the shorter boy. “S-sorry.”

George paused for a moment but not moving from where he was snuggled against Clay’s torso. “You’re- y’know, you’re really comfy.”

If it was even possible, Clay went even redder.

George took one of Clay’s wrists in either hand and wrapped them around his stomach.

Not a single word was said.

They went back to watching the movie, which frankly, Clay was still nervous about.

There were times where he unconsciously squeezed George a little, but he didn’t seem to mind.

One hour later, and the ending credits rolled; Clay let out a breath he’d been holding for virtually the entire movie.

George sighed happily, relaxing into Clay’s chest. “Well that was fun.”

Clay chuckled nervously, "Might have been for *you*,"

George tilted his head backwards to look at Clay from below. "You didn't have fun?"

"Nono I didn't mean it that way--" Clay backtracked, "I really enjoyed you,"

"Oh?"

"I *mean*, it was fun because you were here,"

"*Oh?*"

"Georgie, I swear to god,"

George only laughed in response, hugging Clay's arms around him.

"I gotta get some sleep, it's like two in the morning."

Clay frowned.

Couldn't he just stay a little longer--

"Yeah," he sighed instead, "I understand."

George stood and stretched.

"Well, goodnight," he smiled, stumbling his way back to the door.

"Well at least let me walk you back to your room," Clay stood as well, guiding the sleepy George back to his room.

George chuckled, "If you insist."

Clay opened the door, leaning with his forearm against the doorframe.

"G'night, Georgie."

Now or never, you coward.

George grumbled in response, starting back into his room.

"Wait George--"

He turned, and before Clay could think better of it, caught George by his waist and pulled him close, bringing the other hand from the doorframe and tangling it in George's hair.

"Clay what--"

George didn't get another word in before Clay leaned in, not giving himself room to take a breath before connecting their lips.

It was only supposed to last a second or two-

But of course it didn't.

It wasn't supposed to be so *hungry*-

But of course it was.

Half a minute later, George ended up backed up against the door, hands up under Clay's tank top. He broke the kiss first, gasping for air.

Clay was breathing heavily as well, as both tried to regain their breath.

George slid his hands out from under Clay's shirt and placed them on Clay's cheeks, grinning stupidly.

"Hi."

Clay smiled, "Hey Georgie."

He pressed his lips to George's forehead once. "You want to just go back to the couch?"

George hummed in agreement.

On their way, Clay snatched a blanket from his bed. George nuzzled into Clay's chest again on his stomach, Clay clasped his hands at the small of George's back.

"You comfy?" He smiled.

"Mhm." George mumbled, grinning quietly.

Clay listened patiently for George's breathing to slow and shallow, feeling his steady heartbeat against his own heart.

And once he was totally sure George was asleep-

"Love you, George."

Chapter 32

It was the next morning before either of them woke up -- Clay had slightly *overdone* it on the intensity of their connection and thus passed out from exhaustion.

And because they were still connected at the time, Clay took George with him.

George was the first to wake. There was something small and warm cuddled up against his chest -- a few moments of slow waking later and he realised that it was Dream, in his little blob form.

Hazy golden light filtered in through the curtains, dust drifting lazily through the air.

And George remembered when he'd been in a situation like this.

Dream snored a little as he slept, nuzzling into George more. He smiled, sighing happily and letting his mind wander.

Somehow, he felt more... *free*.

His mind has felt a little less fuzzy than it had been the day before. There was still some... fog. He couldn't remember everything.

But there were flashes--

Snippets of memories that came flooding back like cracks in a dam, they eroded fractures into the wall that the machine had constructed.

And as you know by now,

Fractures only grow.

George remembered Clay.

At least he could almost perfectly remember those memories.

Everything before Clay... it was still a muddled mess of confusion.

Something about a mission- what was it again?

Did it even matter anymore?

He breathed in the fresh scent of linen, holding onto the peace of the moment. Of course it wouldn't last, but it was something. Something to look back on later.

Dream made a little chirpy noise, opening its eyes a little.

George wondered absentmindedly if Clay realized the state he was in -- it was an amusing thought. Nevertheless he hugged onto the little blob Dream.

And of course as he'd thought that Dream started shapeshifting again, resulting in a very sleepy and very grumpy Clay.

"I did the thing..." He groaned, rolling onto his back and smacking a palm to his face. "Didn't I?"

"Mhm," George mumbled, turning onto his back also.

How do I tell him..?

George decided to take Clay's hand, which was laying unattended between them.

"Hey, Clay."

Clay's eyes went wide, he sat bold upright. "George? D-did it..?"

George smiled.

"Oh my *god!*" He yelled happily, tackling the smaller boy in a hug.

"Wait wait wait," George laughed (a little muffled), "I-it's not... all there."

Clay stopped, sitting up again. "W-what?"

George touched his temples gingerly, "God my head hurts..."

"Lemme help," Clay sighed. He placed his hands as they had been before, trying to channel some of the... the innate knowledge that gave him the ability to heal Zak back in the Insurgency.

After a moment, George slumped in relief. "Thank you."

"So..." Clay murmured, letting his hand fall a little to George's cheek. A thousand thoughts played across his features, before deciding against his actions and shying away.

"W-wait," George smiled softly, "I remember *you*. Everything having to do with *you*. "

Clay's eyes flicked up to meet George's, real hope in his eyes. Bottle green with hints of sparkling lime, giving off a faint glow in the early morning light.

"Really?" He said, a grin breaking out on his lips.

George nodded, taking Clay's hand in his and placing it back on George's cheek where Clay had wanted it to be.

Clay's eyes heated up as he choked out a happy laugh and hugged George tighter to him than he ever had before.

“Don’t you ever leave me again,” He whispered, running his hands through George’s hair.

George quickly pressed his lips against Clay’s shoulder before responding, “I promise I won’t.”

(This is a little thing I like to call foreshadowing.)

“Wait,” Clay laughed, pulling back, “How the hell are you solid?”

George’s eyes widened, looking down at his hands.

“Try to phase out,” Clay said gently, watching as George screwed his eyes shut.

He flickered a little, Clay’s hands passed through him again.

“Hold it…” Clay muttered, “Can you like… stay there?”

George tilted his head slightly. “What?”

“I mean like, you were holding solid for a *while*, ” Clay explained, “Maybe you’re starting to get in control of your mutations!”

“I hate that word,” George grumbled, “Can we just call them *powers*?”

Clay giggled, “sure.”

George faded back into opacity, grinning wildly. “I-- I can do it!”

Clay smiled again, “I knew you could.”

“Yo,” Clay said suddenly, jumping up from the bed, “Try to like, walk through the wall.”

George grinned, hopping off the mattress. He focused, fading till he was almost completely see through. He faced west, away from the window. He walked forward, reaching his hand out to the wall.

There was a moment of resistance--

But then he passed right through.

He smiled back at Clay giggling. Clay urged him onwards.

He went forward again, pressing forward till his arms, one leg, and most of his torso were through the wall. He flashed a grin back at Clay, then disappeared through the wall.

A moment later there was a shriek and George reappeared, bright red and covering his eyes.

“What happened?” Clay ran over, taking George by the shoulders. “You ok?”

George just started giggling. “I will *never* get that image out of my *head*...”

“Who’s next door..?” Clay started, a growing sense of second-hand-embarrassment was taking root.

“Darryl and Zak,” He sighed, taking his hands from his face. “It’s not like they were getting *super* intimate but like *it’s still embarrassing--*”

“Oh god!” Clay laughed, “We *probably* should have thought that out more.”

“Yeah!” George squeaked, walking forward to rest his forehead on Clay’s collarbone, who in return clasped his hands behind George’s back.

Clay paused for a moment, burying his face in the shorter boy’s hair. Just... breathing in the moment.

“It’s nice to have you back.” he whispered. “I missed you so much.”

George smiled, eyes still closed. “Right back at you. I remember what it was like after you disappeared.”

Clay frowned in partial guilt, “I’m so sorry about that.”

George looked up at him completely confused, “It wasn’t your fault. At least I know what happened now.”

Clay sighed and nodded, returning to the way they’d been before -- gently swaying in rhythm while the sun rose over the Colorado Mountains.

“Can’t we just stay like this forever?” George mumbled into Clay’s shirt.

“Gogy, you know we can’t...” Clay smiled, “c’mon, I bet the others are awake.”

“A-and I need to apologize to Zak and Darryl...”

Clay wheezed a little, “We *both* need to do that. Get dressed, I’ll meet you at breakfast.”

“M’k.” George agreed, and both went their separate ways.

Dust settled in the hazy air.

How long would this peace last?

Supplementary Log: Trial

=====

“Trial Thirty-two.” A young man yawns into his voice recorder. “Project DeVries, final stage.”

He looks to the side, spotting his partner and clicking off the recorder. “Oh hey.”

The partner smiles calmly, having to look up quite a ways to the first man. “Why hello there.”

“Do you think it’ll work this time?” The doctor leans forward, stepping the last few paces to create an acceptable conversing proximity.

His partner sighs, “Do you want my honest or comforting answer?”

The first man glanced across the spacious lab (it was more of an engineering warehouse than anything else, with its industrial spaciousness and gunmetal-grey exposed piping walls). “Honest.”

The man’s partner ruffles his brown hair in slight annoyance, “Well the Director succeeded in Trial Nineteen, his return trip went without a hitch.”

“But the next three subjects died.” The first man mutters.

“Okay, that might be true- but we need to stay optimistic. This *has* to work, or-”

“Or the cycle breaks, we die, yada yada.”

The brunet rolls his eyes. “Don’t get salty with me. We could always get Illu-”

“No, not a chance, I’m doing this.” He laughs, a sudden smile on his face. “We brought in our finest minds for the project.”

“How many times do you think we’ve done this?” Brunet sighs, wrapping an arm around the other man’s waist.

“The director won’t tell me.”

“I’m sure he wouldn’t.”

“Another time wouldn’t hurt.” The man’s partner smiles up at the first, running his fingers through blond hair. “Yknow, we’re saving the world or something.”

“Or something.” The blond laughs.

“Doctors! Trial 32 is ready to go!”

The brunet draws in a breath. “That’s us.”

“Once more unto the breach?” Blond says, grinning.

“Once more.”

The two men walk off towards their impending fate, doom or otherwise.

Chapter 34

Darryl wasn't sure he'd ever bring his head out of his hands ever again.

"Zak..." He muttered, flopping backwards onto the bed, "*What the muffin just happened...*"

Zak was just as stunned, looking back at the wall in suspicion every few seconds. "I have no clue. He just kind of *appeared*."

"HHHhhhhhh--" Darryl groaned, "I'll never look him in the eye again..."

"Hey, it could have been worse," Zak laughed, sitting by Darryl and trying to get him upright.

"I was... *oh god*," he giggled, "He walked in on me *pinning you to a wall*."

Zak grinned, hauling Darryl to his feet. "Dude, it'll be fine, stop stressing about it."

Darryl went a little limp and let himself just fall into Zak's arms, "I have never been more embarrassed in my *life*."

"Seriously dude *chill*," Zak grinned, kissing Darryl's forehead lightly, "I really don't care right now."

Darryl looked up, his arms draped around Zak's neck.

"I'm just glad I have *you* back." Zak smiled.

Darryl's face flickered through regret, pain, something else Zak couldn't name, but settled on a quiet smile. "Me too, Geppy."

=====

Breakfast was tense that morning. Scott was nowhere to be found, which put everyone on edge.

Wilbur and Fundy paid special attention to them, as Tommy and Tubbo were still allowed to have breakfast with everyone else but Tubbo's fork anxiety still hadn't gone away. Niki had her head down on the table, no one was quite sure if she was asleep or not.

"Hey uh..." George started, phasing through a spoonful of cereal and sending the spoon clattering back into the bowl, "So about earlier..."

"A-all good," Zak grinned, going a little red. "Let's just move on."

George nodded, managing to pick up the spoon again. No questions were posed.

George, I thought of something.

Oh hey Clay.

What is it?

Don't tell anyone you have some of your memory back.

Why?!

I just don't want everyone to know.

Who knows who we can trust.

George sighed, causing a few heads to turn but no questions to be asked.

Ok. I get it.

But as soon as it's safe to do so I am going to tell them.

They deserve to know.

Clay glanced over from George's left. He smiled a little, George was beginning to talk like how he'd used to before the memory wipe.

Of course.

Love you, Georgie.

L--

Thanks.

Clay grinned, this was just like old times.

What, you're not gonna say it?

N-no.

For heaven's sake Clay, I just got my memory back.

Awh. Why do you have to break my heart like this--

He was joking, of course, and George had to stifle a giggle.

Fine.

I...

I love you, Clay.

His green eyes widened, turning to look incredulously at George. George, however, remained unflappable, nonchalantly continuing to munch on his Cheerios.

“So what are we working on today?” Fundy started, gently nudging Niki awake.

“Finishing the reports,” Will sighed, “All our data on *those* two are really outdated.”

He gestured to the two SCPs at the table. Tubbo looked innocently curious, while Tommy had an expression that could only convey looking out for potential threats.

“I take it Scott’s not showing up?” Darryl sighed, resting his forehead in his hands as if he had a headache.

“I guess not,” Clay said, standing from the table. “I’m going to go ahead and get started.”

“We finished my report yesterday,” Nick interjected, “And George’s is half done. Looks like you’re in the spotlight, Clay!”

Clay cringed at the word *spotlight*.

George phased right through the chair so he didn’t have to move it.

“Showing off, are we?” Clay grinned as he and George walked off towards the elevator.

“*Moving* things...” George smiled up at him, “Only peasants have to *move* things,”

Clay wheezed slightly, “Well *this* peasant is just glad you can control the damn power.”

George slipped his arm around Clay’s waist, “So am I.”

Clay returned the favor as they boarded the elevator, silently observing the passage of time as they descended.

“George we can’t be seen like this when we get down there--”

“I know,” George sighed, disentangling himself. “I just... missed you.”

Clay pulled him in again, wrapping himself around the smaller boy and squeezing him tight. “I missed you too, Georgie.”

Ding!

They sprung apart as the doors opened, and they stepped out into the main control area.

He headed first back to their lab with George (as Nick would follow close behind) and brought out the suitcase hiding under a counter.

“Ok-ok...” Clay muttered as he typed his login info into the laptop, “Attempt number two...”

“Whatcha looking for?” George asked, hopping up onto the table and swinging his legs.

“Anything about DeVries,” Clay sighed, seeing the third *Access Denied* message pop up. “I am getting *no where*.”

George frowned, “There had to be other experiments. But those files are all Insurgency,”

Clay’s head snapped up, looking George in the eyes. “Then we just have to find the Insurgency files.”

“But how--”

Clay sighed, stepping closer to George, “Back in the day, you were the person to call about that. I mean, I’m an *ok* hacker, but you’re the pro.”

“Am I now?” He laughed, “Got any convenient memories for me about that?”

“Uh...” Clay rifled through his memory, “I don’t think so. I’ll have to try for now.”

George sat impatiently as Clay typed away, fingers flying a million miles an hour.

Access Denied.

“Bullshit,” Clay muttered, going at it again.

Access Denied.

“Y’know what, *fine*, ” Clay hissed through clenched teeth, “Maybe I’m not the best with computers.”

George smiled, “I guess you really do need me, huh?”

Clay relaxed a little, moving so that he stood in front of George and right up against the counter. “Well we knew that,” he laughed, “Coding’s not why I need you.”

“Awh,” George grinned, placing his arms around Clay’s neck, “Then why *do* you need me?”

Clay’s hands found George’s waist. “Y’know that already,”

“Do I?”

“Mhm.”

Neither of them particularly realized they’d been leaning closer with every word.

“What, then?”

Clay had never really been a patient person; George had been known to tease him to hell and back with that information.

But then again, neither was George.

George closed the final few inches, connecting their lips together like puzzle pieces.

George tangled his hand in Clay's blond hair, tugging lightly at the strands at the nape of his neck. The kiss was soft, delicate, as if they were afraid that making it much more intense would shatter the moment.

"*Mmn*," Clay murmured into George's lips, before pulling away.

George inhaled deeply before answering, "What's wrong?"

"I just—" Clay shook his head, "T-this is wrong."

"*What?*"

"Y-you just got your memory back *this morning*, don't get me wrong I'd rather be uh... *doing that* than anything else right now, but I don't want you to think I'm taking advantage of you or--"

"Shush," George smiled calmly, scooting forward on the counter and bringing them even closer together, "I wouldn't have kissed you if I didn't want to."

Clay sighed, "I know."

"T-that's ok," George leaned back, breaking the embrace, "You don't have to if you don't want to."

Clay grinned, "I've been waiting for *months*."

George looked up at him. Clay leaned forward over the desk, bringing a hand behind George's head.

"God, I missed you," George mumbled before their lips met again.

Supplementary Log: Floris

===== *Two years ago...*

Floris Janssen was nervous about his job for a long time after he joined.

Sure, it was fun working for a secret agency, but the goddamn paperwork tended to pile up. It was really overwhelming -- and it didn't help that he had to keep tabs on a new labmate as well.

Wilbur had made sure Fundy knew that his lab-mate would be more help than hindrance. He talked about his partner Niki for quite some time, to which Fundy had just smiled bemusedly.

Fundy dodged another hurried assistant in the hall, clutching the disorganized pile of folders to his chest.

Why was everyone here always in a rush?

He started looking through his notes again, making his way through the busy hall. Unfortunately, he took his eyes off his footing--

Crash!

Papers scattered everywhere as the haphazard pile in Fundy's arms went every which way.

"Oh my god I'm so sorry--" A deep voice with a British accent said, and Fundy looked up to see a quite tall man with light brown eyes helping him pick up papers.

"H-hi!" Fundy said, flustered to be in such a situation, "No I'm sorry, I should have been looking where I was going--"

The man stood and handed Fundy the final dropped folder, "Seriously, you're fine."

Fundy sighed, "Ok ok... Thanks anyway!"

He continued on, not noticing at first that the man from before was following close behind.

"Uh..." The man said after a few moments, "I guess we're headed the same way..."

Fundy slowed down so he could catch up, and they walked side by side for a little while.

"My name's Floris," Fundy sighed, "Floris Janssen. Call me Fundy though."

The man smiled, "The name's Eret."

"Nice to meet you," Fundy muttered, looking out for a specific door number. He wasn't really focussing on the conversation, rather his surroundings.

“So what are you researching?” He asked hopefully, trying to strike up the chat again.

“Exposure mutations,” Fundy responded, abruptly turning into a hallway. “D-Class stuff.”

Eret hummed in response, realizing that this was the turn he intended to make as well. “Hey if you don’t mind my asking,”

“Hm?” Fundy said.

“Which lab are you in?”

“South Wing, D-Section, Lab 120,” he replied. “You?”

Eret smiled, stuffing his hands in his pockets. “Well hey there, lab partner.”

Fundy stopped dead in his tracks. “No way.”

Eret shrugged, “I guess so.”

Fundy grinned, “Well I’m glad I’ve already made a fool of myself, you should probably get used to that -- ah!”

He pointed to a plaque, it read;

Lab 120

“Home sweet home,” Eret laughed as they stepped inside. “Reports should be... there they are.”

The lab layout was oddly reminiscent of a kitchen, with counters and cabinets lining two of the four walls in an L shape. There was an island countertop in the middle of the room, housing various instruments and supplies.

He picked up a few folders that were stacked in the middle of the counter. “Our first case.”

Fundy laughed, dumping his load onto the first of two stations set up along the walls. “You new here too?”

“Sort of,” Eret frowned, “My first project that’s not solo.”

Fundy shrugged, “Let’s just take a look at our first project.”

He opened the first file on the island countertop. A nameless D-Class study, used in exposure studies and had contracted growths of fungus in patches on their skin.

“Sh-- shoot,” Fundy cursed, “File says they’re only 17.”

Eret inhaled. “D-Classes shouldn’t be that young.”

Fundy nodded, handing off the file.

It was their job to study the recordings, analyze samples, and mainly to find out what about the SCP had caused the mutation and if a reversal or prevention could be used. They'd never actually *see* the D-Class they were studying. Something about *emotional detachment*.

It really did just make Fundy nervous. But hey, when you're top of your graduating class and a shadowy government agency tells you to work for them, you don't really say *no*.

"Samples located in cabinet #3." Eret read aloud, "Fungi, would you find that for me..."

"What did you just call me?"

"Oh sh--" Eret face-palmed himself, "I'm sorry, *Fundy*, the report's about fungus and stuff and your name is similar and--"

"It's cool," Fundy smiled, "I like nicknames."

And so Fundy did as he was told, his eyes landing on a door located on the counter itself.

"Right here," he said, grabbing a few vials of unmentionable contents and setting them down on the table.

"Let's get to work," Eret sighed, taking an erlenmeyer flask and setting it down at his station.

Fundy nodded.

Maybe I can get to know this guy a little better.

Supplementary Log: Floris II

===== *Eighteen months ago...*

“Okay, Fundy, how are you feeling?” someone said from the darkness, as Fundy began to slowly open his eyes.

“*Tired...*” he mumbled, his eyes adjusting to the light.

“I guess that’s to be expected,” The person said, and now Fundy could see that it was Eret.

Eret had been a little... *different* lately. He always seemed tired. Not nearly as friendly or chill as he’d been when Fundy first met him.

“I still can’t believe you volunteered for that,” Eret sighed, “It could have been dangerous.”

Fundy shrugged, sitting up. He was on a hospital bed, just waking up from after a procedure. “Worth it for these,” He put his hands to the top of his head, a smile cracking on his face when he felt the fox ears that were now there. “For science, y’know?”

Eret smiled a little bit at that, but not much. “You want a mirror?”

“Yes, please.”

Fundy grinned stupidly as he figured out how to articulate his ears, by using his reflection and making various facial expressions to see how they reacted.

“How did you--”

“Same process as the one used on S-Ch1477.” Eret said briskly, taking Fundy’s wrist in one hand so that the veins on the inside of his arm were exposed.

He took a sample of blood until the test tube was filled. Tendrils of shimmering bronze liquid swirled around inside the blood, something Fundy was vaguely alarmed about.

“That’s just the experiment,” Eret reassured him, “Everything’s as it's supposed to be.”

“Ok,” Fundy frowned, “Wait, am *I* our next project?”

Eret grinned, “Yeah, I guess so.”

“Well at least it’ll be a bit of a break from the normal stuff,” Fundy sighed, “Y’know, we can take it easy for a week or two.”

Eret glanced back at him. “This isn’t any less important than any other experiment, Janssen.”

Fundy cringed at the disuse of his nickname, and also at the prospect that Eret might think of him as just another experiment.

“That’s not what I was saying, Eret,” Fundy said, “We could both use a bit of a break. You look so tired--”

“No, ” Eret snapped, and Fundy could have sworn his eyes flashed to white for a split second, “No breaks. You can if you want, but I won’t.”

Fundy was a bit taken aback at the outburst. “Ok.” He said, “I’m sorry.”

Eret continued with his task as cold detachment took over his demeanor.

What was going on with him?

=====

Two months later, he started wearing sunglasses.

It was a week of the sunglasses before Fundy saw why.

One of the benefits of having fox mutations, Fundy had found, was that he had the uncanny ability to be completely silent in his steps.

So when Fundy had spotted Eret with his head in his hands, glasses off for the first time in a week, Fundy had to see what was going on.

Eret was in their lab, looking like he was suffering from a really bad headache.

The door was cracked, and unfortunately for Eret, Fundy saw.

Fundy quietly walked in and closed the door behind him.

He made his way to the table quickly, snatching the glasses away before Eret could realize what happened.

As soon as the fox had taken the sunglasses, the jig was up.

“So are you going to tell me what’s going on?” Fundy said sternly as Eret tried to hide his face.

“No.”

Fundy scoffed, “I’m *going* to find out eventually, you might as well tell me.”

“Y’know what, *fine*. ” He swiveled around in his chair, looking up at fundy with completely white, *glowing* eyes. “Happy?”

Fundy clapped a hand to his mouth, “Are you ok?”

“Of course I’m fine,” He said coldly, “Now give me the glasses.”

Fundy giggled, “I don’t think so.”

Maybe that wasn't *such* a smart play on Fundy's part.

"Janssen,"

"M' name's not Janssen to you,"

"I'll call you fox boy if I want to- now give me the goddamn sunglasses!" He got up, and Fundy suddenly remembered their height difference.

Fundy dashed across the lab with the glass like some demented game of keep-away.

Eret pinched the bridge of his nose, his voice dropping an octave. He looked Fundy square in the eyes, his glowing gaze somehow more intense than usual.

"Come over here and give me the glasses, *fox boy*."

Something about his voice said that Fundy probably shouldn't push him much further. Ears flat against his head, he walked back over to Eret and handed him the glasses.

"The voice, man," Fundy muttered, "Why..."

Eret shrugged, "It worked."

Fundy gave him a look, "Are you sure I can't convince you to relax a little bit? You've been working really hard lately, but that's not always healthy--"

Eret cut him off, "You don't understand..."

Fundy raised an eyebrow, "Well then make me understand."

"God I should be telling you this," Eret sighed, sitting back down. Fundy hopped up onto the counter by him. "But I owe it to you, I guess."

"You've been a distant bitch," Fundy laughed, but quieted when he saw the look Eret gave him.

"This..." Eret said cautiously, "Our projects... they're not the only thing I'm working on right now."

Fundy sat up straight, "What?"

Eret started to look really uncomfortable, "I can't say any more."

Fundy's brain started to put two and two together, and unfortunately he added to three.

"Oh my god you've started experimenting on yourself--"

"No no no-no-no," Eret laughed, patting the worried Fundy's arm, "I haven't gone *that* insane yet."

"On your freaking way," Fundy muttered, smiling slightly.

“I think I’ll be fine,” He sighed, “These glasses are starting to give me a headache.”

Fundy swung his legs impatiently. “So what’s the secret project?”

“I *can’t tell you*,” Eret muttered, “That’s why it’s secret.”

“But why the eyes though,” Fundy said, gently taking the glasses off Eret’s face again. “What have you *been* around?”

“Again, can’t tell you,” Eret said, and added upon seeing how anxious Fundy was, “Don’t worry about me, it’s not too dangerous.”

“Somehow I doubt that.” Fundy responded, “You’re a pretty good liar.”

Eret didn’t know exactly why, but the words hurt him a little bit.

What did he mean, *good liar*?

I guess it’s not a good thing.

“I don’t lie to you,” Eret frowned.

“Yeah you do,” Fundy sighed, “And I know you do. Not that I really expected anything else.”

“O-oh.” Eret said, his gaze downcast.

“Hey,” Fundy chirped, jostling Eret’s shoulder to get his attention, “Maybe when you’re done with your shady shit you can screw my DNA to the moon and back and give me a tail. Sound good?”

Eret gave a wry chuckle, “Sure, fox.”

Fundy smiled, hopping off the counter.

Eret stood from his seat, “Can we *please* get back to what we’re supposed to be doing now?”

Chapter 37

Nick stepped out of the elevator, heading down the hallway that led to the lab he shared with George and Clay.

Gosh, he hoped they got a head start. They had a *lot* to do that day.

His eyes flickered across the plaques that denoted which door was which until he found the one he was looking for.

“Hey guys,” He said, opening the door, “I--”

He looked into the room and froze. George and Clay were all tangled up in each other's arms and *George had a notable absence of shirt* --

He backed out of the room entirely and shut the door behind him.

Nick sighed bitterly, rubbing his eyes to try and *get the goddamn image out of them*.

“I guess that’ll teach me to knock.”

With a pained expression Nick knocked on the door, grateful for three things. One, that the door was *not* wooden, and two, that he was beginning to be able to control his fire, and three, it didn’t appear that *those two* had seen him.

“Hey uh...” Nick called through the closed door, “Did you guys get a head start on the research...”

He heard various scuffling noises from inside and a shout of “*Just one minute!*” and Nick stood by patiently.

After a few moments, Clay opened the door appearing very flushed and very embarrassed. “Sorry for the wait Nick,” he said, scratching at the back of his neck.

“All good,” He smiled, walking in.

“And,” Clay smiled, “George, you wanna say it?”

George smiled, and Nick raised an eyebrow.

“Well...” George grinned, “I got some of my memories back!”

“*Dude!*” Nick shouted happily, resisting the urge to hug. “That’s awesome!”

“Yeah,” George smiled softly, trying to flatten his messy hair. “Well, not everything, but I’m getting there.”

Nick grinned, but then his eyes landed on something.

“Uh George...” He said, pointing to a rip along the hem of George’s blue shirt. “Y’got a little something...”

“Oh gosh-” He laughed, and hid it behind a lab coat as he shrugged it on.

“Your shirt’s inside out too.” Nick sighed.

George went red, and Clay turned away to go back to the laptop on the counter.

“So,” Nick said, “What’s on the list for today?”

“That’s a bit complicated,” Clay replied, “We need to finish the reports, which shouldn’t take long, and then...”

“Hm?”

“Well *I* can’t get into all the DeVries files,” Clay crossed his arms, “So we need to find a way to get to them.”

George frowned, scratching at the back of his neck. Something about DeVries. The name urged him to venture deeper into the fog that was his mind -- but the incomprehensible confusion retaliated and left him with a headache.

“The way I see it,” Nick pointed out, “We have two options.”

“Oh?” Clay asked, shutting the laptop and stowing it in the original briefcase.

“Eret or Scott.” Nick added, “They’re the only two who would have access.”

“Yeah,” George responded, shaking his head to clear it. “By the way, how are the others? We need to confer with them before we do anything.”

Nick sighed, “Darryl looks tired as hell, Zak doesn’t look much better. I didn’t really get a chance to talk to them much.”

Slam!

“Guys!” A new voice shouted, and the three turned to see a familiar man in a yellow sweater and navy beanie. “You have to see this.”

“What?” George said, walking over, “What’s wrong?”

“Just follow me!” He exclaimed, dashing off.

They ran after him, almost losing Will in the process.

After a brief time they were at some sort of security room, with monitors and various controls set up and glowing in the darkened room.

“Manifold left us some tapes,” Wilbur said excitedly, “From when we broke out.”

“I remember that,” Nick grinned, “That was fun.”

“Well,” Wilbur said, clicking on a remote, “*This* was from a thermal camera.”

They watched the psychedelically colored video, watching as the blindingly bright form that *had to be Nick* cross the screen to the vaguely warmer blobs that must have been the guards.

“What about it?” Nick leaned on the table, drawing back again when the plastic started to melt underneath his touch.

“Look at the scale,” Wilbur said, pointing to a corner of the glass screen.

The scale went from deep blue to brilliant white. It ranged from 0°C to just over 6000°C.

And Nick was at the top of that scale, not quite pure white but *well on his way there*.

“I’ve been looking at this for a while,” Will continued, gesturing to a specific spot on the scale. “Looks like our volcanic friend reaches about 5k Celcius at his core.”

Nick laughed a little, “Well damn. No wonder everything melts.”

“Well at least we know some heat parameters,” Clay said, “Thanks Will!”

“Wait,” he added, rewinding the tape. “That’s not all.”

As everyone gathered round, he explained. “Here’s the feed from a camera from a little before. And here,” he pointed to something, “Look, here. He goes from dull orange to bright yellow, then to near-white.”

“And here,” George breathed, picking up on what Will was saying, “When we were leaving, he returned to orange.”

Clay shrugged, “Maybe you just go feral, Nick.”

Nick laughed, but then his face went serious, “Wait, that’s a good theory. I can’t even remember that.”

“I’m sorry,” Wilbur turned to look at Nick, “*What?*”

“Yeah,” Nick fiddled with the ends of his headband, “I kind of... I dunno, blacked out.”

“And you didn’t think to tell us this *earlier?*” Clay inhaled incredulously, “Could have been helpful!”

“Dude it’s been a crazy forty-eight hours.” Nick shot back.

Clay paused, “Understandable.”

“Feral Nick,” George giggled, “What will he do?”

“Commit arson,” Nick deadpanned, “Of course.”

“Why did I know you’d say that--” Clay wheezed, doubling over again.

“I was already a pyromaniac,” Nick laughed, “It shouldn’t surprise you.”

“I guess not.”

=====

“Hey Darryl,” Zak exhaled, walking up behind the brunette. “How’s it going?”

Darryl jumped at the touch, but relaxed into it.

“Is this about this morning?” Zak frowned, turning Darryl by the shoulders to face him. “If you’re uncomfortable that’s ok...”

“*Nonono* it’s not that...” He slumped against Zak, letting the shorter boy hug him. “I just... nothing.”

“I doubt it’s nothing,” Zak said, leaning back to look Darryl in the eyes. “You can tell me anything, y’know?”

“I- I know...” Darryl teared up a bit, burying his face in Zak’s shoulder so he couldn’t see.

The best thing about hugs, he’d found, was that no one could ever see your face.

Especially when your eyes started glowing for a moment, hiding your face was important.

Darryl released Zak at last, pressing his lips to the shorter boy’s forehead for a moment.

“I’m fine, I promise.”

Zak opened his mouth as if to speak, but swallowed the words.

“So what’s to do?”

“Finish trying to get Halo out,” Zak said, pinching the bridge of his nose.

“*What?*” Darryl gasped, “We can’t get *rid* m- him!”

“Wait, that’s not what I meant,” Zak chuckled, “I just meant that we need to get Halo to show himself. Maybe we can get him to cooperate.”

“I’ll try,” Darryl sighed, closing his eyes for a moment. “Nope. Nothing.”

Zak furrowed his brows, “Damn.”

“Language.” Darryl said, “You were a little mean to him before he left.”

“*I* was mean to *him?*” Zak hissed, walking back over to Darryl and clasping his hands behind Darryl’s waist. “You can’t blame me for wanting you back, right?”

“I... I guess not.”

Zak smiled warmly, pecking him on the lips. “See? I don’t want to *kill* Halo, I just want to find a way to get him out of *you*. ”

Darryl nodded shakily. “I thought you were finally starting to like him.”

Zak groaned, resting his forehead on Darryl’s shoulder. “You’re talking about the whole *downstairs* thing. He just looked *so much* like you, I was scared-”

It was Darryl’s turn to smile. “I’m not mad that he started to get to your heart. If he merges with me completely, I don’t want you to hate a side of me.”

“I guess.” Zak muttered, “But if he just keeps being a no-show forever, I wouldn’t be upset.”

Darryl grimaced for half a second, fast enough for Zak not to notice.

He ran his hand through the back of Zak’s brown-black hair, drawing him close again.

“Let’s get back to work, muffin.”

Chapter 38

Tubbo was preoccupied, playing with a few bees that were flitting around his hands. He had an arm linked around Tommy's, who was sitting next to him on a hospital bed and looking around anxiously.

"It's ok," Niki sighed, pulling up a stool and sitting by them. "We're getting everything sorted out."

Tubbo smiled and nodded. Tommy grinned a little as well, but it was forced and not completely genuine.

"Ok," Fundy walked in the door, "Wilbur's working on the tapes. That leaves us to work with these two."

Niki nodded, flicking blonde hair over her shoulder. "Fundy, are you ok?"

"Hm?"

"Seeing Eret again, it must--"

"I'm fine."

Niki shut her mouth, knowing she'd get nowhere. She noticed that while he said that he'd been fidgeting with the end of his tail -- something she'd learned to recognize as his "tell" for lying.

She frowned, "So working on speech, right?"

"Mhm."

"Anyone home?" A woman's voice called, as a dark-haired Aphmau stepped into the lab.

"Oh hey!" Niki smiled, "Whatcha need?"

Tubbo recoiled from her presence, to which Tommy's vines started to snake around the bee-boy protectively. He bared his teeth.

"Oh," Aphmau frowned, stepping away, "sorry."

"They get territorial with each other," Niki shrugged, "Everything ok?"

"Yeah," Aph said, handing Niki some photos with Techno's MRI scans on them. "That right there? That's a chip. Techno said it sends some sort of pain signal when Eret tells it to."

Fundy stiffened. *"What?"*

Aphmau turned, "Well, we think he's been using torture techniques to brainwash subjects."

“When I get my hands on him...” Fundy growled, ears twitching in fury.

Niki stood, patting the fox on the back affectionately. “It’s going to be ok, we’re with Councilman Major now. We’re safe. He can’t hurt you again.”

Fundy’s nails dug into his palms, deep enough to draw blood.

“I-- I just... *how could he,*”

Aphmau joined Niki at Fundy’s side. “Well whatever he did in the past, he’s not doing it again. He’s knocked out cold in lab B-103.”

Fundy’s ears perked up, but no one noticed.

“You guys,” he said, “I’m fine.”

He played with his tail again.

“If you’re sure...” Niki smiled softly, going back to her seat by Tommy and Tubbo.

“We just wanted to see if you guys would MRI scan the two SCPs to see if they’ve been chipped,” Aph said, “We don’t want Eret mind controlling them in the middle of something.”

“Of course,” Fundy put on a forced smile, “We’ll do that right away.”

Aphmau grinned and left the room.

“Do you want to tell me what you’re about to do?” Niki hissed at her fox friend, her kind voice urgent.

“What?”

“I’ve worked with you for half a year, I *know* that look.” She said, “What are you about to do?”

“Nothing.” He said, looking her in the eye.

Niki searched his eyes for deceit but found none.

“...Just talk to me, ok?”

Fundy sighed, “Yeah.”

Nick rubbed her hands together, looking back at Tubbo and Tommy.

“I wonder how we’ll actually convince them to get in the MRI.”

Tommy looked up. He pointed to the prints of Techno’s brain, then to himself.

“You’re...” Fundy tried, “You’re Techno?”

Tommy shook his head vigorously, repeating the motion but looking pointedly at Niki.

“You want to do the MRI?” Niki raised an eyebrow.

Tommy nodded.

“Well that’s that problem solved.” Fundy said, “Should we go ahead and see if it’s free?”

“Might as well,” Niki responded.

And of course the MRI was unoccupied, Fundy went to go work the controls as Niki prepped Tommy for the machine.

He looked scared.

He lied down on the hospital bed that fed into the machine, eyes wide. His hand reached out to the bystanding Tubbo, who was looking on in concern and worry.

Tubbo took his hand, shuffling over to stand close while the machine started up.

The scan only took a few minutes, and then it was over.

Tommy was rolled out again, slightly shaken but other than that, ok. He hugged Tubbo around the shoulders from where he was sitting.

When he pulled back, he smiled and nodded reassuringly.

Niki grinned warmly. *He wanted to go first to make sure it was safe for his friend.*

Tubbo was next, and it was just as uneventful. Tommy held on just like his friend had, and a moment later it was done with.

“Well,” Fundy said as he got the scans off the printer, “They haven’t been chipped.”

Niki took the scans and looked them over, tracing neurons with her finger.

“Wait,” she muttered, “Look. These neural pathways, they look like they’ve been-”

“Burned.” Fundy finished, noting where the pathways came to a rough, premature stop.

“These are all in the neocortex,” Niki continued, “This is all memory.”

“Memory erasing.” Fundy inhaled sharply, “But how on earth do they have something that can pinpoint like that?”

Niki thought over the problem, her sharp mind trying to find a way to solve it.

“Where’s Clay?” She asked, “Fundy if we can compare his scans to theirs, we can find what breaks the memory loss.”

“Because Clay got his memory back on his own-” Fundy added, understanding what she was saying.

Fundy watched as Niki slung her lab-coat over her shoulder and dashed out the door presumably on the hunt for a certain Hybrid doctor.

He walked back over to Tommy and Tubbo, who were trying their best to understand what was going on.

“Hey,” He smiled, “You guys need anything?”

They shook their heads. A bee landed on Tommy’s nose. His eyes crossed as he focused on it, but he was smiling.

Fundy scratched absently at the base of his skull, something not feeling quite right. Like a headache but... not.

Oh well, he’d take Tylenol later. Probably just a lack of sleep.

Fundy still wasn’t sure why he was taken separately from the others, back when they’d been ambushed by the Insurgency.

Well, he had a hunch.

He just wasn’t sure he wanted to be right.

Chapter 39

“So,” George said, tugging on Clay’s sleeve to slow him down as they walked, “How exactly are we going to get information from Scott or Eret?”

“Eret’s probably not an option,” Clay sighed, “If he wakes up then Techno goes crazy.”

Nick joined in, “Then that leaves Scott.”

Clay frowned, “I really don’t think he’s *evil*, ”

George stopped in his tracks, yanking on Clays arm and forcing him to a stop as well.

“Clay,” he started, “I know that you feel like you can trust Scott -- hell, I even remember some of our interactions with him. But we can’t be naïve, even if it's a friend.”

Clay’s shoulders slumped. George hugged him briefly, then linked their arms together and resumed walking.

“Hey at least you can y’know, stay solid,” Clay smiled weakly, squeezing George’s hand.

“Um, third wheel over here’s in possession of the collective brain cell right now,” Nick laughed, bringing the other two’s attention back to the task at hand. “May I ask Romeo and Juliet just how, mayhaps, we intend on collecting information from Scott?”

“Which one of us is Romeo..?” Clay asked cautiously.

Nick raised an eyebrow, “Not the point.”

“I’ve been thinking,” George said,

“Never a good sign.”

“Shush, Clay.” George sighed irritably, “I was just thinking maybe we could like... sneak into his office or something.”

“Says the one who can *go invisible*, ” Nick pointed out, “I don’t know about Clay, but I’m not very... inconspicuous.”

Clay’s eyes lit up. “Nick, there’s something I’ve been meaning to test. Can I uh... use you?”

“For *what*?”

“Nothing too weird. Just uh... tell me if you can’t see me.”

Nick crossed his arms, “Clay, what on earth are you--”

He paused.

George looked over curiously, Clay was still plain as day, grinning maniacally, his green eyes glowing a bit brighter than usual.

“Clay. Where the hell did you go?” Nick said softly, looking to George for an answer.

“It *works! It works!*” Clay hissed happily. He broke his focus and Nick jumped in fright. To him, Clay had just appeared out of thin air.

Clay was wheezing quite hard, “You shoulda seen the look on your face! All like, ‘ *WhErE tHe HeLl DiD yOu Go?*’ ”

Nick rolled his eyes, “What did you do?”

Clay regained his composure reluctantly, pausing to explain. “...It’s a bit hard to explain... but basically I tried to convince your mind you didn’t see me.”

“I’m sorry, *what?* ”

“Like...” Clay frowned, “I can’t go invisible like George. But I can, as I just proved, convince your mind that it doesn’t see me.”

George raised an eyebrow, “You better not do that to me anytime soon.”

“Whatcha gonna do about it?” Clay smirked. His expression quickly fell when George brought his fingers up and snapped, a spark jumping from his fingertips.

“*Guys,* ” Nick laughed, “Seriously. What are we doing?”

“We could always just... sneak into his office like I said earlier.” George said.

“That makes me *very* nervous,” Nick responded, “But I think it’s our only option.”

Clay nodded. “We need a distraction.”

“I can do that-” Nick grinned.

“Nick, do *not* commit arson on the building,” Clay said, “Especially not on the building we’re *in,* ”

“No no!” Nick shook his head, “I guess I could just... keep watch then.”

Clay wheezed lightly as they continued on to Scott’s office.

“This could *definitely* use some more planning,” George grumbled.

“Gogy *chill,* ” Clay teased, “It’ll be fine.”

“D-don’t call me that in front of other people,” George muttered. “The last thing I want is *SapNap* getting a hold of that nickname.”

“Ok *Gogy,* ” Clay smiled, but said no more.

All too soon, they reached the very end of the C hallway -- where Scott's office was located.

The hallway ended in a white metal door with a window nearby, similar to the doorways of classrooms in high schools.

Clay knocked once.

Then twice.

The blond turned to his friend, "George, if you would?"

George smiled in a frighteningly excited way, phasing through the door. A moment later and the door's lock gave a soft click and swung open.

"Thanks," Clay murmured, the last bit only George could hear as Clay stepped past him to get into the office, "*Gogy.*"

"Where would one keep extremely important files?" Nick sighed, checking the walls for possible trapdoors.

"I dunno," George shrugged.

Wait... if I can phase through walls...

George had an idea. He grimaced a little as he returned to a noncorporeal state. He dipped his head into the desk itself, phasing through its walls to see the contents.

Mostly just pens, a laptop that they wouldn't be able to use anyway, a few files...

Wait.

That's a safe.

George ducked out of the desk and became solid again, "There's a safe in the bottom left drawer."

Clay smiled, "Good job!"

He ran over to the drawer in question, pulling it open to reveal the lid to Scott's safe.

"You think the files are in there?" Nick said, trying his best not to touch anything flammable.

"If there's one place they're going to be, it'll be in the secret desk safe," Clay sighed. "One way to find out."

Nick nodded and left the office to make sure no one intruded on them.

"Now that we're alone-" Clay started, but George slapped him on the arm lightly.

"C'mon, this isn't the time."

Clay shrugged, going back to the lock. He knelt on one knee by the drawer, as sitting on the desk chair was a bit too high up and sitting on the floor was a bit too low.

It looked like some sort of thumbprint code, which Clay promptly ripped right off. Underneath was a combination lock which Clay set to work on.

Click.

The blond grinned as the first number to the lock was found, chewing on his lip as he tried for the second number.

Another click.

George leaned in closer, trying to see better.

“Hey Gogy,” Clay murmured, not taking his eyes off the lock.

“Hello yourself,” George sighed, kneeling on the floor by Clay as well and folding his arms on the desk.

Click.

“Got it!” Clay exclaimed.

“Well let’s see what’s in it,” George smiled, leaning just a *little* closer.

Clay’s eyes flicked up to George’s, finally registering the lack of space between them.

“I uh...”

“Focus, Clay.” George grinned, quite enjoying how flustered Clay had suddenly got.

“S-sorry.” Clay shook his head clear and opened the safe.

Inside were a few beige files with indecipherable monetary recordings in them, but a few black folders caught Clay’s attention.

“What are those,” George asked, leaning in yet a *little* more.

Clay stuttered, not quite getting words out.

“Oh, shut up already-” George giggled quietly, taking Clay by the collar and pulling him to George.

Soon enough, the files were forgotten.

Clay broke apart first, panting for breath. He looked into George’s half-lidded eyes, completely in a daze.

“George...” He smiled against his partner’s lips, “Why do you have to do this to me...”

This time it was Clay who pulled George against him, pressing them even tighter together with a hand on his neck and his waist.

There was a harsh knock at the door, and a moment later Nick burst in looking like he'd seen a ghost.

“Guys-- *WHAT THE FUCK!*” Nick shouted, exasperated. “*YOU IDIOTS!*”

They sprang apart.

“*SCOTT’S COMING!*”

“Shit.” Clay breathed, shoving the files back into the drawer and placing the lid carefully back.

“Nick go, ” George said calmly, “Just run!”

Nick nodded, closing the door behind him and leaving as fast as he could.

“Is everything back where it was?” George hissed urgently, already starting to fade into transparency.

“Yes!” Clay said, looking around for George but a moment later felt his arm around Clay’s.

“Now might be the time to do your new *trick*...” George whispered.

Clay nodded, reaching out to Scott’s mind.

Hold on.

Why was his mind all static?

“Shit.”

Chapter 40

“George,” Clay hissed, “I can’t do the thing.”

“What do you mean you can’t do the thing?”

“I can’t uh...” Clay paused, a shadow appearing near the door.

Scott.

“Oh for *fucks sake!*” George whisper-shouted, grabbing a tight hold of Clay’s arm right before the door swung open--

Scott strode in, trying to unlock the door with his key and was quite shocked when the door was indeed unlocked.

“Curious,” He muttered to himself, closing the door behind him.

Clay looked around in bewilderment, trying to fathom just *how on earth* Scott didn’t see him.

He glanced down to where he supposed George would be.

There he was, shimmering in some sort of luminescent outline. Clay could still *see* him, so how the hell didn’t Scott?

Oblivious, Scott walked right past them and sat down at his desk.

Clay stared at his hands- they were in the same kind of *outline* that George was cast in.

“Where is it,” Scott murmured to himself, looking through a few drawers.

We need to leave--

Not yet, Clay!

Maybe he’ll say something.

“Ah!” He found his laptop, opening it and logging in.

Clay held onto George’s arm, maybe tighter than he should’ve, and walked to stand behind Scott.

He was typing an email.

The “recipient address” field was still left unfilled to Clay’s dismay, but Scott was beginning to write out something that just *had* to be of use.

It read:

Greetings.

New information coming soon.

Agent delivery by noon tomorrow at latest.

Subjects will be terminated b

Clay let out a little gasp at the word *terminated*.

That *had* to mean him and the rest of the team.

But unfortunately for Clay, Scott had heard the noise.

His head shot up, scanning the room for intruders.

Get us out of here!

On it.

George pressed a finger to his lips, quietly dragging Clay to the door.

George, what are you doing, we can't open the--

Do you trust me?

Of course.

Then trust me.

Clay was quite confused at this, which didn't get any better when George pulled him sharply *into* the door.

Expecting a thud and for the jig to be up, Clay was completely flabbergasted when he phased right through the door.

It felt weird.

Really weird.

Before he knew it, the two were back in the sterile light of the hallway.

George let go of Clay's arm, and the taller boy barely caught himself in time. He was left in a state of disheveledness, his breathing sparse as he gasped for air.

Clay looked at himself, he was back to normal-

"What the hell was that?" Clay gasped, taking George by the shoulders and forcing George to meet his emerald eyes, "How did you do that?"

George smiled weakly. "I dunno. I wondered if I could take someone with me."

"And you just thought to tell me this *now*?"

"Clay, I'm tired as shit," George sighed, "Can we talk about this later?"

"Yeah yeah." Clay sighed, letting George lean against him, the shorter male holding his arm for support as they made their way back down the hallway. "Let's get you back to the lab."

George nodded, and a short while later they found Nick anxiously trying to fill a test tube with some of his magma.

"C-can you guys help me with this..." He stuttered as they walked in, "Something's gonna melt this tube, either my hand or the magma,"

"I got it," Clay said as he took it gingerly, wincing a bit from the heated glass. "Hey George?"

"Hm?" George responded, leaning on the doorframe.

"Could you get Purpled in here?" Clay frowned, concentrating as he tried not to break the glass.

"Sure, but why do you need him?" George crossed his arms.

"I have a feeling that *agent delivery* has something to do with him."

George's eyes widened in realization, and left the room hurriedly.

Clay sighed and returned to Nick, recording a few measurements in the laptop.

"These reports are almost done," He said, "I just have a few things left to do on myself before we can call it done."

"Don't go too crazy," Nick laughed, pinching out a small spark of flame in his hair.

"I won't," Clay grinned.

The door opened, revealing a confused-looking Purpled.

"You guys need me?"

"Mhm," Clay started, "So just how long have you been delivering Foundation documents to the Insurgency?"

Nick took the cue and walked over to shut the door behind Purpled, trapping him inside.

"I'm sorry, what?" Purpled said in shock, genuinely puzzled.

"Don't play dumb," Nick spat.

Clay closed his eyes for a moment, “Wait Nick, it’s ok. He has no idea.”

Nick stuttered frustratedly, gesturing to the spy in question.

“Dude I’m literally reading his mind like a freaking book, he’s not lying.”

Nick made an irritated noise and stood down.

“Does anyone want to fill me in on what I’ve apparently been doing these past years?”
Purpled raised an eyebrow.

Clay went to sit on a nearby stool, ready to explain the whole thing.

“Scott,” he began, “is not who you think he is. He’s been using you as a triple agent without you knowing it.”

Purpled shook his head, “N-no. He said they were fakes, all the documents, they had false info-”

“I’m thinking they didn’t...” Nick said, “*And if* you’re telling the truth, we can’t really blame you.”

“He’s not lying,” Clay confirmed. “But we can use you like that too.”

“I’m not following,” Purpled responded.

“Well we have these files,” Clay patted the top of the all-too-familiar briefcase, “And Scott is going to ask you to deliver them to the Insurgency.”

“How do you know?” Purpled crossed his arms.

“Don’t ask,” Clay sighed exasperated.

“...Fine.” Purpled’s shoulders slumped, “I’ll help.”

“Thanks.” Clay smiled, “All you have to do is come to us first if he tells you to make a delivery for him.”

Purpled nodded, resigned.

Chapter 41

Niki walked back into the lab, looking a little disheartened. “I couldn’t find him,” she said.

“Hey, that’s ok,” Fundy sighed, “We don’t need to find him *right* now. But what we *do* need to do is check the rest of the team for chips.”

Niki nodded. She winced as the earbud in her left ear blared with a voice, and she pressed a finger to it.

“Aphmau?” She said, smiling, “Hey! How are Techno and Eret feeling?”

Fundy couldn’t really hear what Aphmau was saying, but judging by Niki’s face, everything was fine.

“Ok good,” Niki continued, “I was just about to radio you and the girls. We need to check everyone to make sure they aren’t chipped.”

Fundy’s tail twitched restlessly.

“Oh?” Niki frowned, “A new SCP? What’s so special about-”

Presumably, Aphmau cut her off.

“A new Hybrid?” Niki looked Fundy right in the eye, “We’re on our way. I’ll get everyone else to meet us there, if I can find them.”

She took her hand away from her ear, ending the correspondence.

“They just found a new Hybrid,” Niki explained, “Aphmau said to meet her at Containment Unit A-113.”

Fundy plastered on a smile, “You take Tommy and Tubbo, and go find Will. We can’t leave them here alone. I’ll contact the others.”

“Thanks,” Niki smiled, gesturing for the two younger Hybrids to follow her. Tubbo refused to let go of Tommy’s arm as they left the lab, into a strangely deserted hallway.

Leaving Fundy alone.

Fundy knew he wouldn’t be able to get in touch with Clay, Nick, or George. Nick couldn’t wear the earpiece for obvious reasons, George had never gotten one because of the phasing thing, and Clay just... never wore them. Had some sort of baggage against the earpieces.

It’s not like Fundy had one either, his fox ears weren’t really suited for it.

He picked up a nearby tablet, typing in his login and searching for Zak’s earbud code.

Once he found it he contacted the scientist, who picked up the call almost immediately.

“Hey Fundy,” his staticy voice blared over the tablet speaker, “Whatcha need?”

“Niki and I are scanning everyone for chips,” Fundy explained, “But apparently everyone needs to meet in Containment Unit A-113 first. New Hybrid.”

“Oh shit!” Zak said excitedly, and Fundy heard a faint “*Language*” in the background. “What is it?”

“It’s...” Fundy paused, “I don’t actually know.”

“Oh, ok.” Zak muttered, “Well, see you guys there.”

Fundy ended the call on that note. He still had to keep his promise to Niki before he...

Aphmau was working with Sylvee, Shubble, and Amber. Those three would already know and be on their way.

Last time Fundy had seen Techno, he was chatting with the four women like he *wasn’t* some genocidal maniac. Well, Fundy supposed it wasn’t his fault. The chip, and all that.

And then there was Eret, out cold in Lab B-103.

The one who had chipped Techno and made him a cold-blooded killer. The one who’d had Zak’s diamonds removed. The one who’d...

Fundy didn’t need to relive those memories right now.

He made a mental checklist, it seemed that everyone was notified and on their way to see the new SCP.

There was a knock on the door.

“Hey,” A british accent called, and a familiar navy beanie stuck through the door. “Ran into Zak and Darryl on the way to the new Hybrid. Wanna come with?”

The fox froze.

“S-sure,” he said, trying to smile convincingly. “I’ll come with you.”

He grabbed his coat and left the lab, leaving the tablet behind.

The four walked through the hallways, three of them having a lively conversation about something that Fundy didn’t quite catch.

The exited the C hallway and back towards the main office room, crossing it to get to A hall.

And out of the corner of his eye, Fundy saw it,

Lab B-103.

He glanced at the other three doctors, they were laughing and talking, not really paying attention to where Fundy was.

He could sneak out easily.

And so he did, making a swift exit from the group at the entrance to the B hallway.

They faded from view, leaving Fundy alone again.

Why is no one here?

Fundy shook those foreboding thoughts from his head, standing outside the 103 door. For some reason, he couldn't quite get the courage to walk in.

"C'mon Floris," he hissed to himself, "It's just a stupid door."

Just a stupid door.

He breathed in and out a few times.

Just a stupid door.

With a psychopathic ex-best friend behind it.

With a soft click, he opened the door and walked in.

Chapter 42

Zak turned the corner towards the A-Hallway with Darryl and Will, a smile playing on his lips.

“I wonder what it is,” Darryl grinned tiredly, hiding his hands behind his back.

“Whatever it is we’re about to see,” Will responded, “It’ll help us with DeVries.”

Zak nodded, seeing a group of five waiting outside what must be unit A-113.

“Hey!” Wilbur called, “Who are we waiting on?”

“Me,” Aphmau rounded the corner as well, “I guess not now though.”

There was a black box looming ominously to the side of the unit, about Wilbur’s height, maybe a little taller, and it seemed like a person could fit comfortably inside.

The Hybrid must be in there.

“What *is* that?” Niki asked, “Sylvee, do you know anything?”

“No clue, it’s a surprise to me too.” Sylvee gestured to the airlock to the unit. “Shall we?”

Aphmau opened the door for them as they shuffled inside, were decontaminated, and went through to the other side. Techno’s hand went to the back of his neck, an odd prickling sense starting up.

Aphmau wrote something down on the clipboard she carried, muttering to herself.

“Jess? You coming?” Sylvee called, her smile faltering for a moment.

Aphmau looked up, as if she’d forgotten they were there.

“Sorry!” She laughed, fishing in her coat for something. “Lemme just-”

Wham!

The doors to the airlock slammed shut, sealing the containment unit shut. And with it, the eight doctors and hybrids.

Niki’s eyes widened, “Wilbur, did she-”

“*Sorry about that,*” Aphmau’s disembodied voice played inside the unit. Zak whirled around to see where it was coming from, seeing speakers mounted into the corners of the ceiling.

“Just orders.”

“Scott, I *knew* it!” Wilbur spat, “Where is the little *prick* ?”

“Scott’s not here right now,” Another female voice blared over the speakers in the containment unit. *“More important things to be doing.”*

Shubble appeared next to Aphmau, her finger pressed to the earbud.

“How are you finding your new... accommodations?” She grinned.

Tommy dragged Tubbo back towards him as the group condensed to face outwards.

“It’s a pity that Helios can’t take care of all of you...” Amber’s voice came from the speakers, the brunette walking into view by the other two’s side. *“It did the trick for the other one quite well.”*

The other one.

Clay.

Will looked around anxiously, eyes widening when he saw the distinct lack of a certain redhead’s fox ears.

“Where’s Fundy?” He hissed to Darryl, who was standing anxiously beside him.

“I have no clue,” The brunet responded, *“Last time I saw him, we were walking past B hallway-”*

“Eret’s in lab B-103.” Wilbur spat, *“Stupid fox! Why can’t you stay with the group for once!”*

“I guess it’s time to unveil the thing that brought you here,” Aphmau said, bringing a remote from her pocket.

The black box settled in the corner stood ominously, as she fiddled with the buttons of the small controller .

The dark container began to open, revealing a Hybrid inside.

It was a little over six feet tall and well built, about the same as Techno. It had large ram horns from either side of its skull, standing stoically with eyes closed. Dormant.

Wilbur knew that SCP, and it was;

“Schlatt!”

Will smiled, he knew this particular Hybrid. He ran over to it, *“Schlatt, buddy, it’s me!”*

The ram-horned brunet’s eyes remained closed, emotionless.

Wilbur turned to look out the glass, heart leaping to his throat when he saw the positively *maniacal* expression on the doctor’s faces.

"I wouldn't get too close to him if I were you," Aphmau advised, "He might not be new... but he's improved."

Schlatt's eyes flashed open, blank and devoid of thought.

Wilbur scrambled backwards, into the group. "That's not Schlatt," He shuddered. "I don't know what they've done to him, but-"

"Argh!" Techno cried out, falling to his knees and clawing at the base of his skull again. *"G-get it out of me-"*

"The chip!" Darryl shouted, running over to the pink-haired Hybrid. "We have to break it or something!"

Unfortunately for Darryl, he'd run out of time.

"Thaumiels."

This time it was Shubble's voice.

"GET AWAY FROM THEM!" Wilbur yelled at the top of his lungs, yanking Niki away and shoving her behind him.

"Kill."

Techno rose calmly, his face as blank as stone. There was no... *humanity* left in his eyes. Schlatt stepped out of the box, bringing something with him. An object.

It was a little over a yard long, made of some sort of translucent blue material. Crystalline, it seemed.

Wilbur realized two things at once.

"Those are Zak's diamonds," He hissed behind him, as he and Zak had automatically placed themselves in front of the others. "And *that*,"

Schlatt handed Techno the shiny item, who looked over it detachedly.

"That is a sword."

And Techno *smiled*.

=====

As soon as Fundy went through that goddamn door, he knew it was a mistake.

There he was, Eret, out cold on a hospital bed.

And there Fundy was, hurt, wanting answers, and *pissed*.

His tail twitched as he walked towards Eret, looking around for the right syringe.

There.

He picked up the needle of minty-blue liquid, flicked it twice, and sunk it into Eret's neck.

He woke up almost instantly, eyes fluttering open and light spilling from beneath his eyelids. Fundy dragged over a stool, and sat down.

“What the *fuck*- ” Eret sputtered, waking up the rest of the way. “Who’s there-”

His eyes landed on the fox at his bedside.

“Fundy?”

The doctor didn't really know what to say to that. What was he supposed to say? ‘ *Yes hello, it's me, the person you betrayed.* ’ Or maybe he'd say ‘ *No, it's not me, you moron.* ’

“Hello, Eret.”

The dark blond sat upright a little more, yanking the IV out of his arm. “You... you woke me up?”

“Yes, who else would do it?” Fundy sighed bitterly. “I just...”

Eret scratched at his neck. “Hi.”

And for some reason, Fundy started laughing.

“That’s *all* you have to say to me?” He yelped in laughter, “Just *hi*? You turned into a genocidal maniac, a mad scientist, and started experimenting on our friends, and you just say *hi*? ”

“*Your* friends.” Eret frowned.

“Oh poor you,” Fundy put on a mock look of sympathy, “Working with the Insurgency must be so *tough*, I feel so *bad* for you.”

Eret pleaded, shaking his head, “No! No, please listen to me.”

The fox's eyes heated up, he felt the beginnings of tears start to form. “What if I don't, Eret? What if, after everything you've done, you don't *deserve* it?”

“*FUNDY!*” A new voice fizzed and popped with static, “*FUNDY, ITS WILBUR, YOU STUPID FOX!*”

Eret looked on with concern as Fundy scanned his surroundings for the source of the noise, seeing it come from a tablet laying on a counter. “Wilbur what's wrong? Are you ok?”

“*NO!*” he shouted, “*Techno's going crazy because of the chip and Schlatt is here and- OH MY GOD-*”

“Will!” Fundy hissed, “Wilbur!”

Nothing. Not even static.

The fox’s vision snapped back to Eret. “*You.*”

Eret’s eyes went wide, “Fundy, no, you’ve got to hear me out-”

“The chip.” Fundy murmured, his voice dangerously low. “That damn chip. *How are you controlling them?*”

“I- I’m not, Fundy, I swear!”

“Then why, might I ask,” the fox said, “As *soon* as I woke you up, Techno goes *apeshit*, and you so *conveniently* have some sort of murderous vendetta against our friends!”

“*YOUR friends.*” Eret shouted, his eyes screwed shut. “Your friends, Fundy. It’s not like I really knew anyone else besides you and Clay.”

“Both of us, you betrayed.”

Eret swallowed his next words, regretting them before he even spoke.

“I’m putting you the fuck back to sleep-”

“No, *please*,” Eret begged, his hand flying to Fundy’s forearm and holding on as hard as he could. “Please, just *listen* to me!”

Fundy looked at him in bewilderment, the correct syringe of anesthetic already in his other hand.

“Y-you have one chance.” Fundy muttered, setting down the needle in defeat. “This better be the best explanation I’ve ever heard.”

Eret gave a small smile, but not one of malicious or mal-intent. It might have been hope, in that expression.

“Look,” Eret swiveled around in his seat for Fundy to see the back of his neck. “Right there, Manifold hit me with a textbook.”

It looked gnarly alright, bruised to purple and red with the skin split open in some places.

Fundy involuntarily winced.

“And that’s also *right* where the chip is.”

“Wait-”

“Mine’s broken, Fundy.” Eret turned back around, smiling. “See? It couldn’t have been me-”

“No,” Fundy said, backing away and standing up from his seat. He tore his arm away from Eret’s grasp, which had loosened from its former death-grip. “This- it’s too *convenient*,”

“I’m sorry.”

Fundy froze in his tracks.

Eret was the first to shed a tear, smiling sadly and choking out his words.

“Fundy, I am *so, so sorry*.”

The fox stuttered, not able to speak quite right.

“You have no fucking idea how much I regret...”

“Everything?” Fundy sniffed, sitting down again.

“...Yeah.”

“Then why did you do it?”

“Do what?”

“E- *everything!*” Fundy faltered, “Why did you just keep *going* and *going* and why did you-”

Eret cut him off, hugging him tight and burying his head in Fundy’s shoulder.

“*I’m sorry.*”

The tears that threatened to be spilt made good on their threat, falling from the fox’s eyes and collecting on Eret’s grey t-shirt.

“I missed you so much-”

“I know, I know-”

“I- I knew I was *losing you*, I knew you felt alone, I wanted to help-”

“*Shhhh.*” Eret whispered, squeezing him a little tighter and trying to savor the moment.

“*FUNDY!*” Wilbur’s static screams echoed again, and the two doctors released each other.

And suddenly Fundy remembered why he wanted to put Eret back to sleep in the first place.

“Wilbur!” Fundy raced over to the tablet, “Wilbur are you ok?!”

“*YOU HAVE TO HELP US!*” He shouted, “*DO SOMETHING! AGH-*”

He cut out again. Fundy tried three times to reconnect to Will’s earbud, failing.

“Shit.” Fundy swore, “*Shitohshitohshit-*”

Eret stood from the hospital bed, walking over shakily and placing his arm around the shorter doctor’s shoulder.

“I think I can help.”

“Eret, if there’s any chance that chip of yours is still working-”

“It’s not,”

“But if it is!”

“*Trust me*, fox boy.” Eret smiled, placing a hand on either shoulder and turning the redhead to face him. “Trust me.”

Fundy’s mind raced a million miles an hour.

After everything...

Could he?

Chapter 43

Schlatt's focus snapped to Wilbur first.

Wilbur shouted something into his earpiece, panicked.

Something about Fundy.

He started to advance as Techno walked towards Zak. The two Hybrids were coming for the two who were shielding everyone else.

Schlatt drew ever closer as Wilbur yelled, "Techno's going crazy because of the chip and Schlatt is here and- OH MY GOD-"

Techno grinned as he drew back his sword, leaping towards the diamond boy-

Clang!

Zak looked at his arm again, only just catching the diamonds retreating back into his skin. It was like... they *knew*.

Techno stumbled backwards with the force of the blow, a small chip in the side of his sword.

Tommy and Tubbo were trying to get as far away from the fight as they could, with Tommy dragging the bee-boy backwards.

But just then, Schlatt ran forward and caught hold of Wilbur — too fast for the poor doctor to see coming.

In a second his arm was twisted painfully behind his back, Schlatt holding it at an unnatural angle as tears pricked Wilbur's eyes.

"Schlatt," He hissed through his teeth, "You don't have to do this, please-"

A flicker of doubt — maybe recognition — flashed through Schlatt's eyes.

"SCP-Schl1477!" Aphmau's voice blared.

Schlatt winced as the chip in his neck shocked him back into submission.

Wilbur's eyes widened as his earbud came back to life, he shouted into it again, "FUNDY, YOU HAVE TO HELP US!"

"Kill!"

"DO SOMETHING! AGH-"

Snap.

Wilbur cried out, Schlatt dropped him to the floor and went on to some other target. Will tried to get up, cradling his broken arm-

Schlatt turned around and kicked him in the ribs.

Snap.

Tommy let out an enraged yell, letting go of Tubbo and racing forward — he let loose a volley of thorny whips, ensnaring around Schlatt's arm, waist, one cutting across the ram-hybrid's cheek.

And unfortunately for Tommy, that got his attention.

He touched the cut along his cheek, looking detachedly at the blood.

Tommy held his vines strong, not wavering.

Schlatt turned, taking a hand and gripping onto the thorns that bound him. Red blood dripped from his hand, but it was like he didn't notice.

Tommy's eyes widened, too late-!

The ram yanked *hard* on the vine around his waist, causing the lighter Tommy to catapult towards him in a flurry of yells.

Schlatt caught him by the neck and slammed him to the floor, leaning all of his weight on the hand around his neck.

"T-" Tommy choked out, a hand reaching out for his friend as he lost his breath, "T-Tubbo..."

And the bee-boy, the sweet, gentle bee-boy...

He *snapped*.

The hopeless fight seemed to stand still around them. Tubbo's stinger-like claws twitched, growing in length. The few bees buzzing around his antennae grew in number to a swarm, a buzzing cloud of fury that were no longer bees at all- they were wasps.

Tubbo walked forward slowly, the swaths of stinging fury enveloping Schlatt like a blanket of pain. The hand around Tommy's throat released as Schlatt tried to fend off the wasps, tumbling backwards to the ground.

Tubbo ran over to kneel by his friend, "T-Tommy," he smiled. Tommy coughed as air entered his lungs again, and sat up just enough to wrap his arms around the bee-boy and clutch him close, quiet tears falling into Tubbo's shirt.

Tubbo held a hand in Tommy's blond hair, returning the hug. His eyes focused back on Schlatt, who was still... struggling. The brunet didn't shed any tears, he didn't have a shred of mercy for the Hybrid with the ram horns. Not any more.

Techno was relentless in his attacks, hitting Zak again and again until he was shaking with exhaustion. Wilbur was down for the count, Niki had dragged the broken doctor over to a wall, taking care of him to the best of her ability.

The pig hybrid wasn't even trying to kill Zak at the moment. He was trying to get *past* Zak. For behind the diamond boy were two others, two doctors who couldn't really defend themselves as well.

Zak was fast, but Techno was faster. Darryl and Sylvee were already backed up against a wall, with Zak not in much better of a position.

"Techno," the raven-haired boy warned, "You don't have to do this,"

Techno only smiled wider, his bottom canines almost seeming to grow with his malintent.

But then his expression flickered.

Like he was *glitching*, somehow, his face flicked from maniacal glee to pain and regret in the space of half a second.

"*I'm sorry,*" Techno spat, fighting with himself to get out the words. "*R-run..!*"

All four of them knew there was nowhere to run to.

Out of the corner of her eye, Sylvee saw Aphmau type something into the tablet, and not but a moment after Techno settled back into an unemotional, murderous demeanor.

This time when his sword connected with Zak's arm, it had enough force to *shatter* both of the diamonds in question.

Zak fell with a pained scream, jagged cracked spikes of diamond digging into his arm. In some places, half the gem was gone completely, and left ragged holes exposing down to the bone.

Techno didn't even take notice of his broken blade, his eyes flashing to *red* as he raised it high above his head. looked down at the defenseless Zak below him-

And he brought it down.

"*NO-!*"

Zak opened his eyes cautiously, fully expecting to see a shattered sword sticking out of his chest.

Instead, he felt a comfortable weight there, like someone was-

Darryl.

His eyes widened as he saw what had occurred.

Darryl had jumped in front of the blade.

The broken, ragged, cracked blade.

The shards of diamonds.

The crystalline pike that now ran straight through his stomach.

“Darryl no-” Zak whispered, scrambling to cradle the brunette in his one good arm.

Techno seemed shocked as well, dropping what was left of his sword.

The hybrid fell to his knees, his now blue eyes looking down at his own hands in disgust.

“Darryl, no no no no-no-no...” Zak murmured, rubbing his thumb along his partner’s cheek.

“Z-zak,” Darryl looked up into his eyes, he was *smiling*, “I- It’s alright.”

“*It’s not fucking alright,*” Zak cried, “Y-you’re going to-”

Thud.

Techno fell, unconscious.

Sylvee stood over him, the discarded hilt of the sword in her hands. The tip of the hilt had blood on it, which presumably came from where she’d hit the back of his neck with it.

Darryl’s voice started to become thick with blood, coughing some up.

“No,” Zak’s eyes widened as the light faded from the eyes of the boy in his arms, “Darryl?”

No response.

“*DARRYL!*”

The brunette took a shaky breath, “N-not... not Darryl...”

“Wh-what?”

Darryl, no, *Halo*, smiled again, his disguise melting off as the horns grew back, his skin returning to dusky black.

“I... I thought you’d like me if...”

“If *what?*”

“I thought y-you’d like me if I was *him.*”

“Halo you *idiot!*”

The demon smiled a little wider, “J-just be glad I was here,”

Zak furrowed his brows, looking down to the *black* blood that poured from his wound.

Halo's eyes fluttered shut.

“Wait no, *Halo-!*”

“G-goodbye, Zak.” Halo sighed, coughing up more blood.

He went still.

“*HALO!*” Zak screamed, not caring about his arm anymore. He hugged the unmoving demon to him, choking on his own tears.

Sylvee knelt beside Zak, pressing two fingers against Halo's throat.

“Zak, I'm sorry-”

“*Don't say it-*”

“He's dead.”

Chapter 44

“Where is he?” George spat, phasing in and out rapidly in tune with his heartbeat. “*Where is that little-*”

“George, slow down!” Nick huffed, jogging to catch up. “Wilbur left to go meet Niki, Clay is in room C-136,”

“I’m going to his office,” George hissed, sparks flying from his fingertips, “And I’m going to turn him into a human Tesla Coil.”

“Agreed,” Nick sighed, “George, go on without me, I’ll be there in a second.”

“Wait Nick-”

“George, you can phase through *walls* , I’m only slowing you down.”

The brunette paused, then nodded. He dashed off to the right, disappearing into the wall.

Nick sighed, jogging off towards his destination.

The building seemed to go by in a blur as George hastened through its rooms. Soon enough he was standing outside the door of Scott’s office, eyes blazing.

If he’d done anything to Clay...

Without a second thought, George flickered through the door and into the office on the other side.

No Scott to be seen.

No... no nothing in view.

Just an empty room, kept impeccably clean, with nothing in it to give George any clue whatsoever.

George swept his hand across the desk with a cry, sending papers everywhere.

Thunk.

A small black device clattered to the floor, previously obscured from view by papers.

Focusing on remaining opaque, he picked up the object.

“What the hell...”

There was one button on the black plastic, red and square.

Nothing left to lose.

With a simple push, George heard...

Was that a mechanism? Gears? Machinery?

He looked around, trying to find the source of the tumult.

...had that door always been there?

George jostled the door, it was locked. Not that it mattered as George walked right through.

It was a hallway.

A dark, black-metal hallway, red-lit and barely bright enough to see.

George realized where he'd seen this hallway before-

It looked exactly like one of the halls back at the Insurgency.

With heightened suspicion, George walked faster, faster, his walk turning into a jog, then a run, then a full sprint.

"Clay?" He shouted, running as fast as he could.

"Clay!"

The hallway turned into stairs, leading upwards.

He reached out with his mind.

Clay stop!

Hey George!

How are you? What's wrong?

Clay, you can't go in there-

Gogy, I'm fine. Didn't Nick tell you I'm going of my own free will?

YES! But-

You sound really stressed.

Look, Georgie, I know everything seems bad right now.

But I'm safe, I promise.

CLAY WAIT-

Clay cut off the connection, leaving George alone in his own mind.

I'll have to do this myself.

George ran ever upwards, until finally he reached another door at the top of the stairs.

Without hesitation, he went through.

And there Scott was, sitting at some sort of control panel.

George went deadly quiet, fading to invisibility.

What was he doing?

It didn't overlook anything, there was no glass window, just large panels of screens showing various different labs. The Helios logo appeared on the bottom right of each camera feed.

George scanned over the names of the labs, until...

C-136.

NO.

Scott smirked as an all-too-familiar head of blond hair appeared on the cameras.

"Oh, Clay, I'm so *very* sorry the Foundation has to lose you..."

George's head snapped up, seeing Scott reach for a red button.

"Stop!" George cried, returning to visibility.

Scott jumped in fright, turning to see George.

All too soon he was unaffected again, the same smirk settling on his lips.

"I wondered when you'd find this place."

"Scott," George cautioned, "Don't do this, you don't have to,"

"Oh, but I *do*." He laughed, sweeping teal hair away from his eyes, "Project DeVries *must* continue. *He* stands in the way of that, and so do *you*."

George's blood ran cold when Scott reached for the button.

"No-!"

George's fingertips brushed Scott's arm right as he pressed the button, just a few milliseconds too late.

The screen showing C-136 glowed bright white, nothing even visible.

George stepped back in horror, clapping his hands to his mouth.

“Let’s listen in, shall we?” Scott purred, flicking a switch.

George could hear Clay’s screams.

George walked quietly up behind Scott, who was too enthralled with the shrieks of pain over the radio to notice.

In a fluid motion, George placed his hand on the back of Scott’s neck and let *every bit of electricity* run through the man.

His body spasmed for a few moments before shutting down completely.

George numbly staggered back.

Did I just kill him?

Or is he just knocked out?

He didn’t really care about either possible outcome at the moment.

It looked like Scott had been touching the machinery when he was shocked -- George had inadvertently cut the power on Project Helios.

Thank the stars.

He raced back, down the stairs, into the office, just as Nick was reaching it.

“Hi George-”

The brunette ran by without a word.

“-bye George.”

No time.

Do I even have time?

In the blink of an eye, he was at the lab.

He raced inside. The lights were out, but that didn’t matter to George.

Clay was on the floor, knees brought in towards his chest.

He wasn’t moving.

“No-” George murmured, kneeling down beside him.

His skin was red and cracked, burning hot to the touch.

George listened for Clay's breathing, trying to find the rise and fall of his chest-

Both of which were absent.

He was dead.

Chapter 45

Zak was left staring, horrified, at a corpse in his arms.

“This can’t be happening,” He whispered, “No, no, he can’t be dead, not now, no-”

“Zak, I’m *so sorry*.” Sylvee muttered, reaching out but drawing her hand back.

But then something curious happened.

It was as if Halo started to... disintegrate. It started with his horns, crumbling to dark purple dust that drifted away in an invisible wind.

Then it went to his skin, flaking off to reveal bright, normal skin underneath. The black blood from Halo’s stomach shrunk, reabsorbed, then disappeared completely. Soon enough, any trail of Halo had disappeared, leaving Darryl, just Darryl, behind.

His eyes were screwed shut, still letting tears fall from his eyes with choked sobs.

Darryl drew in a breath.

Zak’s eyes flew open — not quite believing what he’d just heard.

Darryl opened his green eyes, looking up at Zak lovingly.

“Hey, Geppy.”

“*Oh my god-*” Zak gasped, hugging Darryl tighter if physically feasible. “You’re alive!”

Darryl smiled, balling his hands in Zak’s shirt.

“But I thought-”

“Halo lied,” Darryl leaned back and sat up on his own accord, “He thought that if you knew that I’d survive, you’d kill him on sight.”

“How long was he uh...” Zak laughed, wiping his eyes, “In control?”

“Just about the whole time,” Darryl giggled. “Sorry, Zak.”

Zak blushed. “The *whole* time?”

“Mhm.” Darryl smiled, “I... I might have let him. We were working together, a bit.”

Zak tinged a bit red, but laughed it off. “You can be devious at times, Dare.”

Darryl leaned over to peck Zak on the lips. “I know, muffin.”

Zak smiled, throwing his arms around the brunet again.

“SCP-SCH1477!” Aphmau’s voice blared, pounding on the glass.

The hybrid in question was on the floor, suffering from a thousand wasp stings. Tubbo watched with satisfaction, a small and yet slightly-scary smile playing on his lips.

“*Fine!*” Aphmau snarled, “*I’ll do it myself, you miserable excuses for Hybrids!*”

Wilbur looked up in alarm, wincing as his broken rib shifted.

Unfortunately for the three scientists behind the glass, they had *completely* forgotten about Fundy and Eret.

Three hypersprays found their places on three necks, two belonging to the fox’s hands and one to Eret’s. They’d used the confusion and chaos to sneak up behind the doctors.

Eret was still shaking, barely walking. As soon as Shubble and Amber fell to the floor, Fundy returned to Eret and supported him to walk. Eret smiled gratefully down at the fox as they unlocked the airlock.

“I never thought I’d say this,” Sylvee said, “But Eret, I’m glad to see you.”

Eret grinned, “A pleasure to see you again as well.” His voice sounded tired and raspy.

Fundy rolled his eyes. “Guess who *else* is chipped?”

Techno helped Darryl to his feet, “I’m guessing it’s you,” he said in monotone.

Eret shrugged, “It’s broken, thanks to Manifold. No need to worry about me going manic again.”

Fundy looked up at him curiously, “Don’t try and blame *everything* on that damn chip.”

Eret shook his head, “No-no, I’m not trying to make excuses. Everything I did, I did consciously. The chip... helped *persuade* me. I think it might have... shut off my humanity.”

Fundy frowned, “We’ll see. Actions speak louder than words, you’d better be the nicest person we’ve ever seen from now on.”

Eret smiled, leaning his head against the top of Fundy’s head. “I’ll try. Just for you, fox boy.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

Techno pulled Zak to his feet as well. At first, Zak shied away from the assistance, but when he saw the remorse in Techno’s eyes he took the Hybrid’s hand.

The pink-haired man winced when he touched the back of his neck, “Sylvee, you really did a number on me, didn’t ya.”

Sylvee shrugged, “I’m starting to get déjà-vu with this shit. Knocking chipped men out from behind... let’s see if I can get a streak going.”

Techno snorted a laugh, “I pity the man who tries to stand against you.”

The diamonds on Zak’s arm had already begun to heal, the worst of the injury no longer showing. He had his arm around Darryl, who seemed to be better off than when the fight started.

“Can I get some help over here?” Niki shouted, still sitting by Wilbur.

Techno nodded and picked Wilbur up from the ground with no effort at all. Wilbur winced, but held his tongue.

“Y’know,” Sylvee said, walking over to Darryl, “I’m going to miss him.”

Darryl smiled sadly, “I will too.”

“...If I’m being honest,” Zak sighed, “So will I.”

Darryl kissed the shorter male’s temple, “He’d be glad to hear that.”

Tubbo helped Tommy stand, and walked over to the unconscious Schlatt. Tubbo nudged him with his foot timidly, trying to see if he was in fact awake.

Which he was starting to be.

See, when you’re attacked by a couple hundred wasps, it has... *an effect*.

But when you’re a Hybrid, you can withstand a little more than normal.

When Schlatt stirred at Tubbo’s touch, the bee-boy dragged Tommy backwards and bared his stinger-like claws.

There was something different about Schlatt — the reason being the lack of consciousness in the three doctors Fundy and Eret took care of.

He opened his eyes to a shard of diamond at his throat. Techno had set down Wilbur and picked up a discarded piece of sword, holding at the other Hybrid’s neck.

Schlatt raised his hands in cooperation, the pig hybrid let him move enough to sit up.

“Sylvee,” Techno smirked, “If you would,”

“Three for three?” Sylvee laughed.

“Indeed.” Techno smiled.

“*Wait-*” Schlatt said, his voice gravelly, “*What exactly are you-*”

Bonk!

Sylvee’s third victim fell to the floor of the containment unit, unconscious. She reached her hand out to Techno, who high-fived her gratefully.

At that moment, Nick rushed in. He paused in concern when he saw Aphmau, Shubble, and Amber out cold on the ground, but shook his head and rushed into the unit.

“What the hell happened?” He sputtered, out of breath. “Wait, that doesn’t matter — we have to get to George!”

“What happened to George?!” Darryl exclaimed, walking over with Zak’s arm over his shoulder.

“It’s not about what happened to George,” Nick started walking towards the exit, “It’s what’s happened to Clay!”

And that’s when everyone remembered what Aphmau said about Project Helios.

“...*Shit.*” Zak gasped.

“Language,” Darryl hissed quietly.

“C’mon!” Nick shouted over his shoulder, running off. Wilbur was well enough to walk with Niki’s help, and Techno simply slung the ram hybrid over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes.

As the twelve left the containment unit, something in the air changed.

Contained, no longer.

Supplementary Log: Killed

===== *The Past.*

“You *killed* me!”

“Sorry!” Toby giggled, shutting his laptop. “You know the rules, I had to.”

“Yeah, but you stabbed me in the back *five* times!”

“Tommy, that’s just the animation-”

The golden haired boy frowned, “It felt personal.”

Toby stuffed more Doritos into his mouth, not really wanting to talk much. Well, about anything other than that stupid game he made.

“Another game?” Toby offered, “Maybe Wilbur will finally agree to VC.”

“Maybe...” Tommy sighed, “But last time we played this late my mom yelled at us.” He took a moment to pause before speaking. “You’re being kinda quiet tonight.”

Toby raised an eyebrow, “Am I?”

“Yeah,” Tommy shrugged. “I dunno, you stressing over midterms or something?”

Toby managed a weak smile, “Y-you know me, Tommy.”

“Okay.”

An uncomfortable silence settled over the two as Toby continued to eat yet more snacks. Tommy hopped off his gaming chair and settled on the floor with Toby, stealing the bowl from the brunet’s hands.

“Spill.” The blond grinned, “It is *not* midterms.”

“I just-”

Toby really didn’t know whether he wanted to laugh or cry.

As much serotonin as these Friday night sleepovers gave him, there was only so much he could keep in.

And so, he settled on both laughter *and* tears.

“Wh-” Tommy’s eyes went wide when he saw his friend’s reaction, “Did I say something?”

“No, no-” Toby sniffed and wiped a hand under his eyes, “Believe me, you haven’t done anything wrong.”

Tommy set aside the snack bowl with an aggressive thump, “Who hurt you?”

“N-no one-”

“Whose kneecaps do I have to *turn into stew*?”

“No one, really, I’m just...”

“Just what?”

“I’m just *tired*. ”

Tommy scoffed, “We’ve all used that excuse, now tell me their name and address.”

“Seriously, I’m just so *tired*, Tommy.” Toby’s voice broke, “I used to be so much better-”

“With what?” Tommy furrowed his brows, trying his best to be empathetic.

“Everything.” Toby responded. “I used to be so... I used to have potential, y’know? Like, everything was a matter of *potential*, ”

“Hold up.” Tommy shook his head, “Who says you don’t? Potential’s bullshit anyway.”

Toby looked up at him. “You don’t understand- I used to be the top of my class before this year. I’m *tired*, and I have no idea why-”

Tommy glanced at him quizzically, “What’s brought that on?”

“I- I don’t know, that’s the whole *point*. Everything was easy, and now I’m like, falling behind or something, and now *effort* and *hard work* aren’t doing anything...”

“Ok, I understand,” Tommy frowned, “But- you’re wrong.”

“Huh?”

The blond shook his head, “I just don’t get why you’re beating yourself up.”

“Because I’m not who I used to be-”

“Yeah, you’re not.” Tommy shrugged, “Oh well.”

“Wh-”

“I didn’t know you back then, but something tells me you weren’t really you.” Tommy sighed, “Let me guess, you used to be really good at english, science, history, etcetera?”

Toby nodded quietly.

“And now, you’re wicked good at computers, but not so much at other stuff.” Tommy finished, and seeing Toby affirm the statement, he laughed.

“Wh-why are you laughing at me?”

“I’m not laughing *at you*, ” Tommy giggled, “But I find it hilarious that you find the *one* thing that makes you *normal*, and you break down over it.”

Toby didn’t respond, instead resting his chin on his knees and staring down at his shoes.

“Man, you’ll be fine.” Tommy smiled, handing the bowl of chips back to his friend and dusting flavoring off his fingertips. “Hey, I’ve got something to cheer you up!”

“Hm?”

Tommy sprung up from the floor, walking over to a small briefcase-shaped box with a silver chrome handle.

“What’s in there?” Toby stood as well.

“Vinyl player,” Tommy grinned.

The box sat on top of a white painted chest of drawers. Tommy pulled one of the drawers open with a dramatic gesture, revealing an array of stacked discs in organized chaos.

“What’ll it be?” Tommy asked, “I have Beatles, Elton John, Queen-”

“Queen!” Toby smiled, “I love Night at the Opera!”

“It *was* a good album,” He agreed. “Ooo- look at this-”

He took out a disc and slipped it out of its paper sleeve. “Let’s see-” He fit the disc onto the turntable, setting the needle down with a satisfying clack.

Play song here! <3

“Ooh, you make me live

Whatever this world can give to me”

Toby genuinely smiled for the first time that night. “That’s my second favorite song on the album!”

Tommy did an awkward shuffling dance as he walked over to Toby. “What’s your favorite?”

“39’,” The brunet responded, “Always vibed with it.”

“Ooh, you’re the best friend

That I’ve ever had”

If he had to describe the way Tommy danced, it was like an extra from the Never Gonna Give You Up music video.

“What are you doing-” Toby laughed incredulously.

“Vibing.” Tommy grinned as he snapped his fingers to the beat.

“Alright!” Toby shrugged. He tapped his foot and started to sing along.

“Oh, you’re my best friend.”

Tommy picked up a nearby hairbrush and pretended to sing with a mic, even doing a bit of a Freddie Mercury impression and strutting around the room.

“Eh?” The blond grinned, “Feeling any better?”

Toby nodded contentedly. “Much better.”

“Rain or shine, you’ve stood by me gal

I’m happy at home!

You’re my best friend.”

The two started, for lack of a better term, *vibing* around the room. Dancing in their awkward ways and making complete fools of themselves.

“Whenever this world is cruel to me,

I got you, to help me forgive”

“Thanks for this, Tommy.” Toby sighed, returning to his comfort foods.

The blond snorted, “Of course, what else was I going to do? Let you be upset?”

“I-”

“I think the fuck not,” Tommy grinned, “Not on my watch.”

Toby smiled quietly. “I’m glad we do this every week.”

“You know I’ll never be lonely

You’re my only one”

“Same.” Tommy agreed, “It’s pogchamp.”

“Pogchamp?” Toby asked, raising an eyebrow.

“You don’t-” Tommy sighed frustratedly, “Well, you say it when something good happens. Like, if you get a hundred on a test, that’s pogchamp.”

“I might not really understand that one,” Toby shrugged, “But hey. It seems like a good word.”

“Poggers.”

“I'm happy, happy at home

You're my best friend”

Toby giggled, feeling his eyelids get a bit heavy. He yawned, stretching deeply.

“We should head to sleep,” Tommy sighed, “Much later and Mom’s gonna stage an intervention.”

Toby nodded.

“Oh, you’re my best friend

Ooh, you make me live!”

“You think everything’s going to be ok?” Toby asked.

Tommy smiled, “I know it will.”

“Oh, you’re my best friend.”

Chapter 47

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“He’s flatlining!” A voice shouted at the doctor, panicked. “Davidson, do something!”

George breathed in. He breathed out.

He was calm.

Nothing he hadn’t done before.

The long, drawn-out shrill of death from the heart monitor pierced through the doctor’s skull like a pike. Within seconds he felt a headache coming on.

This SCP was humanoid in nature, but George didn’t really know much else. He’d been called into the theater without warning that evening, making him miss dinner with Clay.

He was quite resentful of this, so he wanted to get that particular surgery over as fast as possible.

Extraction of a strange growth on the back of the SCP’s neck, that was all George had to do. Why it was so urgent, he didn’t know.

He also had no idea why the SCP just... died.

The humanoid brain has seven minutes of activity left after the heart and lungs stop. After that, it’s total brain death. No coming back. In those seven minutes, one had to work miracles.

“Defibrillator,” George ordered, cold repose taking over. “Now, please.”

A machine was wheeled over to George’s side, two paddles waiting patiently in their holsters. While the bystanding doctors helped get the SCP on its back, George took the paddles in his hands, rubbing them together rapidly.

“Start at 220 Joules,” George commanded as an assistant scrambled to get the settings right.

“Davidson, are you sure-”

“Do it!” George barked.

The assistant nodded.

“Clear!” He shouted, pressing the paddles at the SCP’s sternum and right above its heart.

Whoomph!

The SCP's body jumped from the shock, a single heartbeat showing up on the monitor. George looked up at it, starting to grow anxious.

"260," George muttered, starting the process over again.

"Clear!"

Whoomph!

Nothing.

George gritted his teeth. "Up it to 360 Joules."

"That's the max limit-"

"Do I look like I don't know what I'm doing?" George shouted over his shoulder. "Do it now!"

The assistant shakily complied, turning the knob on the machine to the max.

Good lord, George thought, I hope this works.

"Clear!"

The SCP's body jolted more harshly than before, falling back to the bed a moment later.

The flatline continued.

"Shit," George cursed under his breath, "Do you think if we-"

Beep!

Beep!

George broke into a smile as his eyes found the monitor, now flashing with a slow — yet steady — heartbeat. He slumped in relief, letting the other assistants take the SCP away. He sat back in a nearby chair

"Another notch in the belt," his assistant smiled, "Right, Davidson?"

"Yessir," George grinned, "What does that make, five lives I've saved this week?"

"Indeed it does," The assistant laughed, "You're the best surgeon on this side of the site, what else did you expect?"

George clapped a hand on his assistant's shoulder,

"Dr. Jacobs, it's only Wednesday."

“Yes it is, sir.”

=====

George reeled from the memory, opening his eyes and finding himself in the darkened room of C-136.

“Shit!” George yelled, scrambling to his knees and looking for Clay’s watch. “How long was I out?”

He remembered things from the memory — he had seven minutes.

Clay’s watch showed that it had only been *four*.

George tried to keep from panicking, *his best friend and boyfriend was dead*, not breathing, no heartbeat, and he had three minutes left to try and get him back to life somehow.

The memory flashed behind his eyes again.

The defibrillator.

He looked around the room. It was just a lab, not a ward. There was no machinery like that—

“Wait a damn minute,” George muttered under his breath, “I don’t need a defibrillator.”

Not that he could find one in time, anyway. Clay would be brain-dead by then.

If he got this right, he could get Clay’s heart started again-

But if he got it wrong...

Pushing those thoughts away, George relied on pure instinct as he unbuttoned Clay’s shirt like he would have all those months ago, placing his hands on the blond’s sternum and heart.

How the fuck am I supposed to know how much?

What if I just make it worse?

No. He had to do this.

George started with a small pulse. Clay’s body arced a little, but not nearly as much as the one from his memory.

He had to make it stronger.

George flickered a little, his hands falling through Clay’s chest.

“No no *NO!*” George shouted desperately, trying again.

This time, he was able to keep solid.

George shocked the blond again with all that he had, and this time it looked like the memory.

He checked for Clay's heartbeat.

Nothing.

George let out a frustrated yell, trying to figure out how to make the shocks more severe.

The watch said one minute left.

One minute, and Clay was gone forever.

You can do this, George.

George yelled in surprise, trying to see where the voice came from.

Wait, he knew that voice.

Clay?!

I know you can do it.

How are you-

I'm always going to be here, George.

C'mon, you can do this.

With renewed courage (and mounting confusion), George thought back to when he'd attacked Scott-

All the hatred that had ran through him, the fear, the anger.

But all those emotions washed away when he looked at Clay's tranquil features.

Thirty seconds.

"I have to do this," George said, forcing himself to think about the days after Clay disappeared.

He forced himself to remember how he'd thought for a horrible few days that his best friend had *abandoned* him. He made himself feel everything he'd felt when he'd seen Dream turn into Clay for the first time, when Clay was pronounced dead by the Foundation, he *remembered* how everyone had just... *gone on without him.*

Mounting panic was settling in his heart as sparks started to arc from his fingers.

Ten seconds.

George gave an enraged cry and pounded all his power into Clay at one time, the room lighting up with his anguish. The body below him spasmed, muscles reacting to the pulse,

much more than a regular human could take.

And then George slumped, exhausted, on top of Clay's body.

He looked at the watch.

It had been seven minutes.

His time was up.

Chapter End Notes

Yo uh- idk if any of yall are genshin fans- but if you've been keeping up with Kazuha's storyline (and totally not his dead boyfriend), I'll be publishing a little angst/fluff fic soon about them both :D

Chapter 48

...Did it work?

George looked back at his watch.

Then stared at Clay.

Nothing.

“NO!” He yelped as he collapsed on top of Clay’s chest, no longer able to control the sobs that built up inside of him. His nails dug into his palms, burning valleys into his skin, and he didn’t even care that blood pounded in his ears-

Wait, he paused, puzzled for a bit.

That wasn’t blood pounding in George’s ears.

He looked up from his boyfriend's chest, hope in his eyes.

He pressed his ear to the blond’s heart-

And there it was, slow but steady, a heartbeat.

George almost didn’t believe it, clapping a hand to his mouth in joy.

It had worked.

It had fucking worked.

Clay still looked awful. His skin was singed and burned, like he’d momentarily dunked his entire self in boiling water.

Nick burst in the door, a whole trail of scientists following behind him.

“Oh my *god*, ” Nick gasped, “George, is he-”

George turned with a smile, shaking his head. Small tears fell from his eyes as he picked up Clay’s hand. “He’s alive.”

“Oh thank goodness,” Darryl walked forward, kneeling by George. “What happened..?”

George shook a little as he inhaled, “He died.”

“What?”

“H-Helios went off,” George whispered. Wilbur’s eyes widened in recognition, but winced when his ribs shifted.

Clay's hand twitched in the brunette's.

"Clay?" George exclaimed, turning back to the doctor.

His mouth twitched upwards slightly, breaking a small smile.

"H-hey Georgie," He croaked, not opening his eyes yet.

"Oh my god, Clay," George grinned, cradling the other boy's head in his arms.

"I..." Clay opened his eyes a little, blinking. His eyes widened as if in horror, but quickly regained composure.

George didn't notice.

"I k-knew you could do it." Clay smiled, closing his eyes again.

George sniffed, smiling.

"I hate to ruin the moment," Nick hissed, "But we have to *go*."

As if on cue, bright red lights and sirens blared.

"ATTENTION STAFF! DANGEROUS SCPS UNCONTAINED!"

"C'mon," Darryl helped George to stand. "Let's get out of this muffining place."

Zak stepped in to help Clay, who could barely keep upright. George slipped his arm under the blonde's, helping Zak half-carry him.

"Where are we even going?" Niki shouted ahead as they left the lab, trying to make their way to the main control room.

Nick wheeled around to look at them, not explaining a thing. "Anyone have a phone?"

"Why the hell do you-" Wilbur raised an eyebrow, but Sylvee interrupted him.

"Here!" She said, tossing a the flip phone his way. He caught it delicately as to not melt it, but when Nick saw it was a Nokia, he wasn't as worried about damaging it.

"Go out to the vans," Nick shouted above the uproar, "They should still be outside the house, I'll catch up to you!"

"What are you doing?" Techno asked.

"Finding us a place to go," Nick said, gesturing for them to go. "Save me a driver's seat!"

George nodded over his shoulder, as the rest of the group dragged their broken and bruised bodies to the elevator.

Curiously, there were no doctors or guards in sight — but they didn't let that deter them from forging ahead.

Nick watched them board the elevator, then turned to the phone.

He smiled as he punched in the number he had called so many times, the pattern almost soporific in nature.

The phone rang barely two times before it was answered.

"H-hey, uh—"

"Nick?"

"Well, who else has this number—"

"Where the fuck have you been?"

Nick cringed a little, he sounded angry.

"Sorry... I uh..."

"Nick Armstrong, explain please."

Nick smiled, they weren't *too* angry. He never used his full name when he was being *really* serious.

"Gosh I really haven't talked to you in a while, have I?"

The person on the other end of the line frowned, placing a hand on his hip.

"It's been a week."

"Only a week?" Nick was genuinely shocked, it felt like months.

"Yeah — but do you know how freaked out I was? I still am!"

"I have *so* much to fill you in on, the most crazy shit has happened,"

"I've got everything under control for now, I'm in the mood for a story."

"I wish I could, but I'm kind of on the run—"

"You're WHAT?"

"Well, I'll tell you when we get there,"

"Get where?"

"Nick?"

“Do you have any spare rooms?”

He looked around the house, trying to size up the area.

“I can fit about... Seven? Eight, maybe.”

“What about fourteen?”

“WHAT?”

“Nick, you can’t just-”

Nick grinned, starting to close the phone.

“Thanks babe! Can’t wait to see you-”

“Nick-!”

Nick giggled a little as he ended the call, imagining the look of indignation on the blonde’s face.

He couldn’t wait to see him again.

The lava boy jogged back to the elevator, the ride back up all too slow.

Why weren’t there people trying to stop him?

Unease built in his stomach as he exited the elevator to a completely dark and deserted mansion, not a sound to be heard other than his own footsteps.

He rounded the corner to the main foyer, speeding up his pace as he made his way to the front door.

Nothing happened.

No one tried to take him down.

Was it because Scott-

Nick stopped his train of thought. He didn’t know how he felt about Scott’s death, whether it was amoral to be glad — or disloyal to Clay and George to be sad.

As he exited the building his eyes landed on the two black vans that still waited outside, engines idling.

He hopped into the one closest to him, which had the driver’s seat open for him.

Fortunately the vans had three rows of seating, so fitting seven people per van wasn’t a problem.

Tommy, Tubbo, and Niki were seated in the back row, looking comfortable enough. George and Clay were in the middle, with the taller of the two slumped over on George's shoulder. Clay looked like he might be asleep — and Nick didn't blame him.

Wilbur was seated in the passenger seat, managing to smile through a grimace as he cradled his torso with his good arm.

Fundy appeared at Nick's window, knocking on the glass. Nick rolled it down for the fox to speak.

"What's the plan?"

Nick frowned, "You'll see when we get there."

Fundy crossed his arms. "...Ok. We ready to head out?"

The raven-haired doctor grinned as he shifted the van into drive. "Just follow me."

Fundy nodded and returned to his own vehicle just as Nick started to leave the gravel driveway.

Nick kept a tight grip on the wheel, getting a strong sense of déjà vu from when they first came to Site 05-Major.

Hopefully it wasn't a sign of a similar outcome.

Clay stirred a little, finding George's hand entangled with his own. The touch was borderline painful on his burnt skin, but it didn't really matter.

It was just after noon, and there were no cars on the mountain highway.

Something was *wrong*.

Nick kept his apprehensions to himself as the vans sped along Colorado's highways, making their way southeast.

At least they made it out alive. Barely, but they made it. They'd live to see another day, and what that day would bring...

...well, they'd just have to burn that bridge when they come to it.

Chapter 49

Every mile they traveled closer to Nebraska, Nick got a little happier.

He almost couldn't suppress his smile as they crossed into Wyoming around 4PM, the drive thus far uneventful.

The phone rang again.

Nick picked up the Nokia from the cup-holder, holding it to his ear with one hand.

"Ar-"

"Hey Nick,"

"H-hey."

"Did you really say fourteen earlier?"

"Yes, I did."

"Dear," the voice sighed. Nick could picture the man pinching his nose in frustration. "I don't have that much room."

"We can improvise," Nick offered, fully aware that everyone was watching and listening. "Didn't you say that you were building us a new room?"

"Yes," They said, "but I'm only one person, and you remember how haphazard I am with building supplies-"

"Yeah, I remember," Nick smiled softly, earning a raised eyebrow from the brunet in the passenger seat. "We can help you, when we get there."

"Really?" he asked, "What, you got a team of big strong SCPs with you?"

"Actually," Nick grinned, "I do."

"Huh." He muttered, amused. "Well, get your pyromaniac ass back to Nebraska. Q's having a fit."

"Oh shit," Nick laughed, "Is he ok? And does he live with you full time now?"

The man shrugged. "Well, this place is totally self-sufficient now."

"Is it?" Nick raised an eyebrow. "Dr. Jacobs, you are a genius."

"Thank you, Dr. Armstrong."

Both people giggled a little on their sides of the line.

Both boys in the middle row were fast asleep, with George's head on Clay's shoulder and the blond's resting on George.

Tommy and Tubbo were napping as well. The bee-boy was snuggled up against Tommy's chest, with the taller's arm around Tubbo as he slept. Tommy's vines snaked around Tubbo's form unconsciously, perhaps the need to protect each other extending even to sleep.

Meanwhile in Car Two...

Fundy looked over at Eret, who was in the passenger seat.

"Penny for your thoughts." the dark blond sighed, his glowing eyes reflecting off the windshield.

"I'll pay you a quarter to keep them to myself," Fundy muttered, returning his eyes to the road.

He could *feel* Eret staring at him.

"Ouch," Techno smirked from the very back row with the unconscious Schlatt and Sylvee. "That must hurt."

Eret turned to go back to looking out his window, and Fundy's shoulders relaxed when he did.

As much as the fox wanted to be able to blindly trust Eret, he knew he couldn't.

Fundy changed lanes to follow Nick, who was exiting onto I-85 North. The redhead didn't know exactly where they were headed, but highway signs were starting to point towards Nebraska.

But what was in the corn state..?

Fundy didn't even think there was a major Site there.

"Can I at least turn on the radio?" Eret sighed, "If you're not going to talk to me."

Fundy responded by pressing the power button on the van's audio systems — Eret's face fell.

Loud country music started blaring-

"Turn that dumpster fire off-!" Sylvee shouted from the back.

"Working on it," Fundy hissed through his teeth, turning the knob till the monotone voice of a reporter seeped through the air.

“And you can see here that the cold front- I’m sorry, we’re being interrupted by some breaking news. It seems that- oh god-!”

The entire mood of the vehicle went from lackadaisical rivalry to tense apprehension in half a second.

“I... we have escaped terrorists on the loose.”

Eret blanched, his hand unconsciously going to the back of his neck.

“We have confirmed names for most of the group, which are said to be fourteen in number.”

“Wait,” Fundy whispered, “Fourteen, there’s-”

“Here are some of the names.”

“Dr. Clay Anderson.”

“What the fuck..!” Eret spat out in disbelief, “There’s no way!”

“Dr. George Henry Davidson.”

“It’s us,” Sylvee breathed, “They’ve made us Public Enemy Number One.”

“Dr. Nicholas Armstrong. Dr. Floris Janssen.”

Fundy tensed at the sound of his own name.

They escaped only a few hours ago -- how did the Foundation already have the entire *nation* on their trail?

“Dr. Alistair Richards.”

Eret rooted a hand in his hair, pulling at it. “They didn’t just...”

Fundy looked over, taking his eyes off the road. “Just what?”

“They just used my real name.”

Fundy’s expression hardened as he returned his gaze to the highway.

“Dave Beckerson.”

A flicker of recognition glittered in Techno’s eyes. “I know that name.”

“It’s you, dumbass,” Zak replied. “You weren’t always a pig-man, y’know.”

“Language.”

“O-oh.” Techno muttered.

“Dr. Sylvia Roanoke.”

“And there I am,” Sylvee threw her hands to the air, “Little fucks really are thorough.”

Techno chuckled, “They knew my name before I did. I’d call that thorough.”

And unfortunately for the Foundation, it was one of the few times Fundy’s brain decided to be completely accurate in its assumptions.

“Wait, if they knew Techno’s name,” Fundy shouted over the white noise of the highway, “That means they had access to the DeVries files, or at least the Hybrid experiment logs.”

“Not many people even knew about Techno,” Eret started, his brows furrowing. “It was just me, Clay, and...”

“Scott.” Sylvee snarled, “The little bastard. George should have let me at ‘em.”

“The man took the full force of Davidson’s power,” Eret muttered, tugging at the longest bits of his hair. Fundy remembered when he used to do that back when they were just lab partners. It always happened when he got either really excited or really nervous.

“Either Scott is dead and there’s someone new to worry about,” Eret continued, “Or Scott wasn’t fully human to begin with.”

“Well *you should fucking know!*” Fundy yelled, his voice going up an octave. “Seeing as you two were all *buddied up!*”

“Fundy, I’m sorry-”

“Well, what’s done is done.” Fundy said under his breath. “I’ll say it again, do you know *anything* about Scott, maybe about him being a Hybrid, maybe-”

“If I did, I would have told you already.” Eret sighed.

“Dr. Zak Ahmed. Dr. Darryl Noveschosh.”

“Dr. Wilbur Gold. Dr. Nikita Wagner.”

“They’re even going after Niki?!” Darryl frowned, “They really aren’t taking any prisoners.”

“Jebediah Schlatt.”

“Jebediah?” Techno poked the sleeping ram with his elbow, “I’ll have to remember that.”

“Tomathy Simons and Toby Smith.”

“Wait,” Zak asked, “Who’s that?”

“Tommy and Tubbo,” Darryl sighed, holding onto Zak’s arm, “I believe.”

“Ok *that* crosses a line,” Sylvee laughed menacingly, “Those two are *children*. They are kids, they didn’t join the Foundation, they were *taken*. How *dare* they-”

“And that concludes the list of names. They’ve been last spotted right outside of Grant, Colorado. Where they are headed, no one knows. They are believed to have hijacked two black Chevrolet Suburbans. Stay tuned for more breaking news on this team of dangerous doctors.”

“Danger Doctors,” Zak snorted, “I like the sound of that.”

“Noooo,” Darryl smacked his arm, “Don’t say that.”

Zak tilted his head to kiss Darryl’s cheek. “Ok, fine. It’s not like we go looking for danger anyway...”

Fundy tensed as he followed Nick onto Highway 88.

Zak sighed, “...it always seems to find us.”

Chapter 50

Scott watched as the group escaped, wincing. *Damn electrokinetic hybrid .*

He could practically *sense* the group's confusion as no intervention happened, nothing stopping their so-called escape.

Fools, all of them.

He grunted and pushed himself to his feet. He had one more idea to stop them — it was risky, but it could work.

He approached the level that had been abandoned for a creature that had nearly killed him, and almost killed Eret. He clutched a piece of clothing in his hand. Exhaling, he placed his card inside the scanner. A soft *beep* rang out as the only door between him and the failed experiment ground open.

The light from the hallway flooded Sublevel 2, chasing the impregnable darkness away. With the cloth clutched in his hand, he stepped inside with an almost nervous, shaky exhale. He ventured further in, attempting to reach out to the creature.”?

A sudden rapid scrabbling of claws and snarling sprang from the ark mere feet away. Scott stumbled, forcing his feet to move backwards out of range of the beast.

As SCP-5349 crashed into eyesight, Scott held his arm out, praying to whatever god was out there,

"Stop!"

It stopped, trembling, but stopped. Scott breathed a sigh of relief, beginning to shake at how hard he had to work to hold the connection. He approached the angry beast. Although it couldn't move, it was still angry — snarling, with acidic spit dripping.

Scott grabbed the armored plates on top of its* head and he yanked down. With surprising ease, he lowered its head so that they were eye level. Scott's tired shaking intensified as he put one hand on the plate, and with his other hand held up one of Nick's old shirts. He held it to the creature's nose, nearly smothering him.

*<SCP-5349. Find them, **and kill them all.**>*

The creatures faint, black pupils dilated. *He had an order.*

Scott let go and rushed backwards; he could still feel the connection, though waning. SCP-5349 ripped away from Scott, and with a maddening roar, charged out of the door. It had a mission to complete.

Scott tapped his earbud, a sadistic grin stretched across his face, "*Clear all levels from Sublevel 2 to ground level. If found, you will be terminated on sight.*"

"*This is your first and final warning.*"

Meanwhile...

Nick punched off the radio, staring blankly ahead in horror. They'd been playing Beatles music and singing along when the newscaster interrupted it, announcing the fact that they were now fugitives under the law.

Clay spoke up from the middle row, "What are we going to do now?"

"We should be there in an hour or so," Nick muttered, "We'll be safe once we get there."

"Where exactly is *'there'*?" George asked, letting go of Clay's hand.

Nick dodged the question, "I can't wait for you to see it at sunset."

Clay raised an eyebrow, his eyes still closed. "A farmhouse, huh."

Nick froze, "Wait--"

"Sap, I can *read minds*." Clay chuckled, "And he's right you guys, it's a gorgeous place."

"Can I maybe ask you to *not* snoop around inside my head?" Nick grumbled, to which Clay frowned silently.

The silence was suffocating, but no one was brave enough to turn the radio back on. Highway signs pointed to a city called Scottsbluff.

"Forty-five minutes," Nick announced.

George looked out the window, watching hills of corn and wheat roll by. It was strangely serene, speeding along.

He spotted a diner. With a small pulse of joy, he recognized it as the same chain he'd met Clay in.

"Clay," George whispered excitedly, "Look--"

Clay's focus snapped to George's voice, smiling lightly. "Hm?"

"Look out the window!" George grinned, "See anything?"

The brunet turned back to the window.

"The restaurant?" Clay said, "Yeah, I see it."

George looked back at the blond, who was staring blankly outside the glass.

(Fifteen minutes passed...)

Wilbur coughed weakly, pressing his head back against the headrest in pain.

Nick picked up the phone again, dialing with one hand.

“Thirty minutes,” he said, not bothering to say hello. He was smiling, strangely.

“*Hey Nick-*” His voice answered, *“I can’t wait to see you either. I’m gonna give you the biggest hug-”*

The lava-boy’s face changed from content to horrified instantly, only just now remembering his particular situation.

“*Nick?*”

He unconsciously shut the phone, ending the call.

How had he forgotten?

How had he not remembered that a simple touch could *kill* his loved one?

“A-are you ok?” Niki asked from the back seat, instantly picking up on his change in demeanor.

Tommy woke up, taking a moment to let his brain whirr to life and to take note of the sleeping Tubbo on him. A bee landed on the flower of Tommy’s plant-horn, and Tommy giggled quietly. The bees tickled a bit, after all.

The soft laughter brought Tubbo out of his slumber, stretching and smiling sleepily.

Niki envied them, honestly. They had no idea what was going on, all they were doing was enjoying the fact that no one was actively trying to end their lives.

“*I’m not o-*” Nick started, but composed himself. “Twenty minutes, twenty minutes, twenty minutes...”

He seemed to be repeating it inside his head.

All the joy that he’d felt before? It was replaced with mounting dread.

(Another ten minutes of Damocleian tension.)

Nick pulled off the paved street onto a dirt path, dust flying in every direction. The occupants of the van rocked back and forth with the movement, letting loose general noises of discomfort.

“*Sorry, sorry.*” Nick sighed, “He really needs to get this a bit smoother.”

“Who’s *he*?” George asked, looking worriedly at Wilbur. He seemed to be in a lot of pain, holding his ribcage and gritting his teeth.

Nick didn't answer, but instead kept driving. They reached a gate, which happened to be open. A small wire fence stretched in either direction, disappearing into a cluster of trees on either side. Gently sloping farmland displayed inside the gated area, the fiery leaves of autumn dusting the landscape.

Just *being* here made the ravenette less anxious.

The Foundation might be his work and his life, but this was *home*. Well, wherever *he* was, that was home, but still.

"Not long now," Nick smiled sadly, knowing the predicament that awaited him at the end of this particular road.

No one responded.

The two vans travelled the dusty road, passing rows of corn, fields of soy, pumpkins, wheat, etc. It was quite idyllic, as the sun was beginning to disappear behind the trees in the distance.

A white-painted farmhouse came into view -- it had grown in size since Nick last saw it. A red pickup rested outside the porch.

Another few minutes, and the vans rolled to a stop outside.

"Wait, is this it-" Clay started, unbuckling his seatbelt with some noted difficulty.

"Yeah, stay here for a minute." Nick parked the van, hopping out.

Fundy exited his car as well, motioning for its occupants to stay stationary.

The fox walked over, "Do you need us to vibe for a few minutes in the van?"

Nick nodded, patting the redhead on the shoulder. "Thanks, that'd be good."

When he turned back towards the house, a familiar figure was leaning on the front door frame.

Nick broke into a smile, tears pricking his eyes. "Hey, Karl."

The man in question ran at him without warning, launching himself into Nick's arms.

"Wait wait *shit*-" Nick frantically shoved them away from him, already seeing singe markings on his dusty lavender shirt.

"Nick," Karl's eyes finally landed on his magma-spots, "What the *fuck* are those?"

"Um..." He grinned sheepishly, "Long story."

"Good for you, I'm in the mood for one." The former doctor crossed his arms, before taking Nick by the wrist. "Plus, I missed you."

He looked down at his wrist in shock, “How am I not *burning* you?”

“T-that’s a long story too,” Karl giggled, “Let’s just say... running this farmhouse has had its effects.”

“You’ve got exposure mutations?” Nick gasped happily, just now noticing the glowing freckles that dotted his boyfriend's face. “What exactly are they-”

“Well,” Karl poked the lava on his shoulder curiously, not seeming to feel it when the magma touched their skin, “I’m fireproof, and the freckles, and that’s all as far as I know.”

Nick took the opportunity to draw him close to him again, burying his face in Karl's shoulder. He saw another figure exit the house, followed by yet another.

The lava-boy’s head shot up excitedly. “Quackity!”

Karl chuckled, “You might want to make your hellos.”

“How’s it going, SnapMap...” Quackity flicked hair out of his eyes. “Also um...”

"Long story..." Nick sighed.

Karl frowns suddenly. "I missed you."

“Love you too,” Nick sighed, kissing Karl's forehead.

“Mhm,” He raised an eyebrow, “You still have some explaining to do.”

“Yeah yeah...” Nick responded, turning to wave the occupants of the two vans outside.

They exited in pairs, the most notable pair being Techno with Schlatt unceremoniously draped over his shoulders.

“You weren’t kidding,” Karl did a headcount, “There’s really fourteen of you.”

“Hello,” Fundy walked up to Karl, shaking his hand. “Fundy. Nice to meet you!”

Karl shook it back, “N-nice to meet you too..?”

George phased through the door, not bothering with the seatbelt or actually, y’know, opening the door.

“...*Karl?*” He shouted, his eyes landing on the light brunet.

“Dr. Davidson?” Karl’s jaw dropped, “No way!”

George broke into a smile, “I barely remember you, but I know who you are, at least!”

Karl’s face fell. “What?”

Nick, George, and Fundy answered at the same time.

“Long story.”

Karl was frowning, trying to figure out logistics of the sheer number of guests they had. “We have five bedrooms, a living room with three couches, and I have a shit ton of sleeping bags.”

“Well there’s SCPs, plus the two of us,” Karl gestured to himself and Nick. “Sam won't mind moving in with Mark.”

Techno spoke up, “I’m happy on the couch. And *this* shitwad,” he gestured to the ram Hybrid on his back, “Can sleep on the cold, hard floor.”

Niki helped Wilbur hobble over to the group, “Tommy and Tubbo can stay with Will and I.”

Wilbur smiled weakly, wincing.

Techno cleared his throat, “Did I see potatoes on the way in?”

All heads turned the way of the pig Hybrid.

“What,” Techno grinned nervously, “I just like potatoes.”

“Why don’t you guys come in,” Karl smiled, “Make yourselves at home, I’ll get snacks.”

Nick grinned, “Thanks, man. Glad to be back.”

Karl leaned up and kissed Nick’s cheek, “And we’re glad to have you back.”

Chapter 51

“Let’s get you guys inside,” Karl smiled, leading the odd bunch onto the porch and inside the house.

The interior was simple and yet cozy. A stairwell branched off from the left of the door, right up against the wall. It led to what looked like a loft area, with a wooden railing letting the loft overlook the living room to the right of the front door. There, three white linen couches surrounded a coffee table, arranged so that they could see the TV mounted on the wall.

Under the little loft space sat a kitchen, snugly tucked under the overhang. There was a hallway that led to some downstairs rooms; there were two on the first floor (soon to be three), and three on the second floor that could be accessed via the loft.

Everything was warmly lit as the sun sunk lower, lighting up the sky in a plethora of violets and pinks.

“God, it’s good to be home,” Nick sighed happily, breathing the familiar scent of oak wood and campfire smoke.

George ran his hand along the back of one of the couches, smiling when he could keep it from phasing through.

Clay wrapped his scalded hands around George’s waist, pressing his lips to the top of the brunet’s head.

Niki helped Wilbur sit on one of the couches. He let out a cry of pain, holding his arm.

“Karl,” Nick said urgently, “we have fractured ribs and a completely broken elbow.”

He nodded. “I stole some things from a hospital in Crawford. Good thing we’re surrounded by doctors, eh?”

He dashed to the kitchen, opening a cabinet in the counter and pulling out gauze, some sort of fluffy-looking padding, and a roll of what Will could only assume was the stuff that made the hard bit of casts.

“This’ll do for the arm,” Karl muttered. “Do we have any other *medical* doctors here?”

“Me,” George piped up, “I... I was a surgeon, before this happened.”

“Then get over here!” Karl said, returning to wrapping Will’s broken arm in the gauze.

“George, you don’t have all your memories back,” Clay warned the brunet, “Do you know what you’re doing?”

George looked up at him. “I never really realize how much is coming back, it’s like the amnesia has been fading and I didn’t even notice.”

Clay smiled.

George took it as a sign to go to Karl, having them hold the padding in place. “We need to get this plaster casting wet,” he said, “Anyone have a glass of water?”

Nick nodded and dashed off to the kitchen, gingerly turning on the tap. A splash of water landed on his hand-

“God *damnit!*” he yelled, dropping the glass in the sink. It didn’t shatter, but Nick was holding his hand and shaking it like he’d just rammed it into something.

Clay grimaced, “I’m guessing *water plus pyromania incarnate equals not good.*”

“You could say that!” Nick hissed through gritted teeth. “That hurt like a-”

“Do we really need to continue this simile?” Darryl grinned, stepping in and bringing the glass of water to George.

George muttered a thanks and soaked the plaster casting until it was malleable, before starting to roll out the fabric onto Will’s arm. He winced, but kept silent.

“You’ll feel it heat up a bit,” George advised, “But it’s just the chemical reaction in the plaster, it’s fine.”

After saying that he smiled to himself, the doctor in him mademaking a welcomed reappearance.

Wilbur nodded, shifting a little. The plaster was already starting to dry, enough for the two doctors to let it go.

“Now, the ribs...” Karl frowned, “We have two options.”

Will raised an eyebrow, coughing slightly.

“I don’t have a brace, but we can get one no problem,” he said.

“Wait, but that can cause pneumonia, breathing problems...” George shook his head, “Common practice is to just let it heal on its own.”

“That was going to be the other option,” Karl sighed. “How bad was the injury, exactly?”

“That goat dude over there kicked him.” Sylvee muttered angrily. Karl’s eyes snapped to the Hybrid that Techno had dumped on the floor by the coffee table. When he woke up, there would be... *consequences*.

“Boots,” Karl observed, “Probably steel-toed. We need the brace, the damage was too concentrated.”

George frowned, but nodded. “You’re right.”

Karl frowns slightly. "I'll go get one from Crawford- I'll be fine on my own, don't worry. Nick, you can hold down the fort."

A set of footsteps ran down the stairs; Zak turned to see that they belonged to a very tall boy and a shorter one.

The taller one had completely black-and-white patterned skin, which seemed to bifurcate down his body. The shorter one, however, had dark green hair, with lighter green skin that seemed to be mottled between shades of green. His eyes were completely black.

Nick's face lit up when he saw the two, "Mark! Sam!"

With a happy smile, Sam rushed forward, but Nick held up his hands to stop him. "Can't," Nick gestured to the lava on his shoulder and arms, "I would, but I can't."

Sam's face fell a bit, but he remained smiling. "*Glad to h-have you back!*"

Nick's jaw dropped, "Karl, he's made so much progress!"

The man smiled, standing from beside Will. "I know, right? Sam's practically fluent now, just listen to him!"

Sam grinned happily. "*I'm still working on it, b-but getting there.*"

Nick smiled even wider, "That's *amazing!*"

The group made their introductions to the two SCP teenagers, especially Tommy and Tubbo, who seemed to really like Mark and Sam.

Karl looks at the scene, "Before I go, I should introduce you to the others."

"Others?" Zak looked up. "How many are here?"

"Six," He replied, "Plus me, Quackity, and Nick."

Nick's brows furrowed, "Should I go get Anthony and Caroline?"

Karl nodded. "It'd be best."

Nick kissed him on the forehead and dashed upstairs, disappearing into one of the rooms that branched off from the loft.

Karl grabbed his truck keys, and walked out the front door.

Inside the room, were two more SCP kids. One of whom could only be described as a catboy, and the other seemed to have some sort of sheep trait -- two more Hybrids.

They were playing some card game, and were laughing to themselves so fiercely that they hadn't noticed when Nick had come in.

"Uh- hi-" He smiled, sitting down with them.

Anthony (the one with the cat traits) looked up, startled, then broke into a smile and attempted to hug Nick

The lava Hybrid then had to, once again, explain just why this would have been a bad idea-

Caroline on the other hand, watched them quietly with only the hint of a smile on her face. These two were more reserved than Sam and Mark, it seemed.

“What are you two playing?” He smiled.

“*G-go fish,*” Anthony replied.

“What? Karl never taught you Texas Hold ‘em?”

“*N-no-*”

“Well then I’ll have to.” Nick laughed. “But I guess we can finish this game first.”

Caroline blinked, and started dealing Nick in. “*P-play.*”

Nick nodded. “I will, as long as you like.”

Chapter 52

The sun set a few hours later, plunging the rural scene into pitch black night. The Milky Way arced high over the sky, lighting it up in nebulaic colors. Everyone was present and accounted for in the warmly-lit farmhouse. The air was calmly quiet, but not in a suffocating way.

Everyone had somewhat settled in, picking rooms and such. Techno took the big couch (and volunteered Schlatt for one of the others).

On the downstairs floor, there were two rooms -- one big room and one smaller. The master bedroom actually had two mattresses in it, as they used it as a room for two SCPs. Tommy and Tubbo claimed one of the mattresses, while Will and Niki took the other. The other downstairs bedroom had been claimed by Karl and Nick shortly after.

If one travelled up the stairs, one could see the colossal blanket and pillow fort that Zak, Darryl, and Sylvee had built for themselves. A little past that, there were three doors along the wall. The first led to a room containing Quackity, Mark, and Sam -- the lack of privacy was a bit irritating to the two SCPs, but they didn't make a fuss.

Door number two led to the residence of Clay, George, Fundy, and Eret. The fox was a bit grumbly about this. Clay wondered why Fundy'd been a bit cold to Eret; after all his chip wasn't working. He was tempted to just root around in the ginger's head, but didn't, out of respect. Clay made a mental note that he needed to set out some rules for himself when it came to privacy.

Door three. That belonged to Anthony and Caroline, and it was also the smallest room in the house. It wasn't *uncomfortably* small, but enough so that three probably wouldn't fit.

Currently, everyone was settled on the couches in the loft and living room. Curiously enough, Techno was in the kitchen with Nick, doing something with potatoes.

(It's Techno, what did you expect?)

Clay smiled to himself as he and George rested on one of the couches, the smaller brunet quite literally sitting in his lap. Maybe things could finally return to normal, if he tried hard enough.

He pressed a swift kiss to the Brit's forehead, enjoying the fact that his lips didn't burn in pain when they made contact. Clay looked at his arms -- they were considerably better.

Clay would have healed Wilbur by now, if it weren't for the fact that Helios had weakened him so much he couldn't even shapeshift. He tried to produce white claws, and got nothing. There was no way he could heal broken ribs if he was *that* weak.

There was a short knock at the door, and everyone froze. Nick left the kitchen and ran to the door, looking through a peephole. He sighed, relieved. It was just Karl.

Karl walked in as Nick opened the door, holding a brace triumphantly. “Hail the conquering hero,” he laughed.

“Indeed,” Nick replied, taking it from him. “Wilbur, you up to put this on?”

The british man nodded, grimacing. “Might as well be.”

Nick and Karl helped him sit up from leaning on the armrest, buckling the rigid brace around his torso. Once it was secure, they let him back down again.

Will smiled. “Thanks, feels a little better.”

George frowned from the opposite side of the room, “We have to be careful with that thing. If you start having trouble breathing-”

“Then I’ll tell you,” Will smiled softly.

Mark played with some of his hair absently, sitting on the stairs. “*W-what are we d-doing tonight?*”

Karl shrugged, “Up to you guys, but I’m *exhausted*. ”

Nick leaned over to kiss his cheek before returning to something on the stove.

“I’ve missed your cooking,” Karl sighed, slinging a towel over his shoulder, “Much better than mine, y’know.”

“This is literally box mac ‘n cheese,” Nick laughed incredulously, “Because *someone* forgot to get the good ingredients.”

Karl put up his hands in defense. “Hey, you didn’t exactly give us time to go on a shopping trip before you *showed up out of nowhere*. ”

“Fair,” Nick grinned. “But I swear, I’m making us gourmet next time.”

“Mmm,” Karl patted him on the back as he left Nick and Techno by themselves, “Looking forward to that one, hothead.”

“You *really* want to get started on the fire puns?” Nick turned, brandishing a wooden spoon. He had an apron on, it was quite a sight. How it hadn’t caught on fire, no one knew. “Ok, *firebrand*,”

“How about this, Mr...” Karl faltered, “Mr... I can’t actually think of one.”

“I win,” Nick teased, going back to the cheese.

Techno was busy watching something in the oven, a slightly maniacal glint in his eye.

“Karl,” Quackity said, leaning up against the wall, “You lock the gate behind you?”

“Sure did, Alex,” He nodded, “And it’s armed.”

Quackity nodded, but George overheard.

“Armed? You guys are running electricity through it?” He asked.

“Yeah,” Q sighed, “Better safe than sorry. Anyway, it’s not enough to kill someone. How much is it again-”

“Ten amps,” Karl replied.

Nick whipped their gaze to him, “*Kaaarl! That kills people!*”

Karl threw his hands to the air. “Oh! Well, I didn’t know that!”

“*How could you not know that?*” Nick said, exasperated.

“Yeah, I’m in the wrong here, I suck,” Karl said with a frustrated grin, “Just thought I’d stop whoever’s trying to get in here *permanently*.”

George nodded, “Yeah, that’s fatal. Back it down to one or two amps.”

Karl made an irritated noise. “Fine! I’ll be right back.”

He left the house again, presumably on his way to change a setting or two.

“Well, the ratchet-ass macaroni is done,” Nick grumbled, checking cabinets for bowls. “Wow, you guys sure have renovated since last time I was here.”

A timer went off, and Techno made a noise that could only be described as a borderline evil cackle.

The pig-man opened the door of the oven, a heavenly scent wafting out from it.

“Potatoes ‘r done.” Techno announced, bringing out a giant cookie sheet full of golden-brown fries. “Don’t ask how I know how to make these, I just *do* .”

“The potato knowledge is ancestral,” Nick snickered.

“So it looks like pig-man fries and ratchet macaroni for dinner,” Eret said, “the latter part of this meal got me through many all-nighters. Well, that and Red Bull.”

Fundy couldn’t help but laugh, “I used to get so worried about you, the sheer *volume* of that stuff you consumed-”

“Those were the days,” Eret sighed happily.

“Yeah,” Fundy glanced up at the dark blond’s blue-green eyes, “They were.”

The farmhouse didn’t really have a dining table made for a quantity of twenty-two, so people just ate where they were. Living room, the loft, some stayed in their rooms.

Mark cautiously took a bite of one of the fries, his face lighting up.

Karl walked back in, "It's set to one amp. Happy?"

"Very," Nick smiled. "C'mon, dinner's ready. I swear," he shook his head, "Tomorrow I am going to make a *real* meal."

The blonde man leaned on Nick as they ate while standing, "I'm gonna hold you to that."

"Maybe we could do some stargazing later," Darryl looked outside one of the windows, "This is perfect deep-sky."

The moon was new, completely dark over the Nebraskan night. It was, indeed, perfect for looking at the heavens.

Zak walked over, wrapping his arms around the taller boy's shoulders -- it was a bit of a feat. Darryl turned around in his arms, placing his hands at the small of Zak's back. "That sounds nice, muffin."

Darryl laughed, "So I *am* rubbing off on you. I might get you stop cursing altogether--"

"Not a chance in hell," Zak laughed.

"Language!"

Techno made a gagging notion from the kitchen, pretending to throw up in his mouth. "I'm surrounded by couples," He muttered, "What circle of hell is this..."

Chapter 53

Darryl was having a hard time sleeping.

Every time he closed his eyes, all he saw was *him*. He wasn't angry, he wasn't even regretful. The only expression Darryl could describe was *sadly happy*, which didn't make sense at all.

So there he was, lying on his back, staring up at the ceiling of the pillow fort that he'd built with Zak.

Trying not to think about the person who'd sacrificed his life for Darryl.

He forced his mind to the place it always went to relax; the stars. He'd been fascinated with astronomy since he was in elementary school, going so far as to run an astronomy club for both his school and neighborhood until college hit.

He smiled a little, this farmhouse would be perfect for stargazing. As he checked his watch, he saw the time was a little after 1AM.

Perfect.

He rolled to his side, finding Zak facing him and sleeping peacefully. He looked so serene, nothing like the stress that showed during waking hours.

Darryl debated with himself for a moment and propped himself up on his elbow. Should he wake the sleeping boy, or does he leave it alone and maybe not sleep at all tonight?

Zak really hadn't gotten into astronomy, despite the brunet's best efforts. Maybe tonight could change that.

"Hey," he whispered, careful not to wake Sylvee sleeping a ways away, "Muffin, wake up."

He grumbled a bit, not stirring.

Darryl grunted in annoyance, flopping down so his face was mere centimeters from Zak's. Quietly pressing his lips to Zak's forehead, he accepted defeat. No stargazing tonight.

"H-hi..." Zak mumbled sleepily. To Darryl's surprise, the kiss had woken him up. "W-what's wrong?"

"Nothing..." Darryl sighed, reaching up to play with a strand of the shorter boy's hair. "Just couldn't sleep."

"Mhm," He hummed, pressing his forehead against his partner's. "Anything I can do?"

Darryl smiled softly, "I remembered Karl saying something about a telescope-"

Zak rolled onto his back, slapping a hand to his face. "Shoulda known. You've always got your head in the stars."

"Mm." Darryl agreed with a grin.

That had been his first passion at the SCP Foundation. He'd been in the Astrophysics department until he met a curious new researcher by the name of Ahmed... let's just say that Darryl had always felt an attachment to the other man, he just might not have realized just how deep it ran.

"Might as well," Zak sighed, leaning over to peck the brunet on the lips before shifting to get out of the fort. "You won't sleep otherwise."

Darryl followed him, "Thank you."

The whispered conversation held by starlight was brought to a close, as the two dashed down the stairs, hand in hand. They slipped on shoes and socks, silently opening the front door and placing one of the ram hybrid's brown Tims as a doorstep.

Footsteps crunched on the gravel driveway as they made their way to a more open space, Darryl leading the way.

"This is literally *perfect*," Darryl giggled, practically bouncing in excitement.

"Hhhhh," Zak grumbled, still half asleep. He was smiling though -- seeing his partner this excited made him happy as well.

Darryl glanced over at the garage unintentionally, surprised to see two figures standing on its near-flat roof. One of them spotted the pair.

"Hey!" A deep british accent called.

"Eret?" Darryl raised an eyebrow, dragging Zak over to the building. "What-"

"You've gotta help us," another voice said, and Zak saw the familiar outline of fox ears. "We have no idea how to work this thing."

Darryl craned his neck to see what the *thing* was. Behind them was the telescope that Karl had spoken of, no doubt the sneaky fox had found it somewhere.

Zak face-palmed himself again, "There he goes..."

Darryl rushed over, "How can I get up there?"

Eret gestured to the ladder-like structure that was leaned up against the wall of the garage, it looked like one would grow plants on it or something.

"Careful-" Zak warned as Darryl started the climb. He then muttered to himself, "I can't believe it's *me*, telling *him* to be careful."

Zak followed, of course, and soon all four were either standing or seated on the roof. Darryl was busy at the scope, fiddling with knobs. It had a little control panel with glowing buttons, it looked sophisticated.

“They have a Celestron NexStar 8SE,” Darryl breathed, “I bet you can get a clear picture and see all the way to Uranus with this thing-”

Zak snickered in the background.

“Oh very funny,” Darryl grumbled, but softened his expression when he saw Zak genuinely enjoy himself. “Little muffin...”

He quickly calibrated the scope, which took about five minutes. Zak was lying on his back on the roof, just staring up at the sky.

Darryl glanced over, using the control panel to select a target. Once he did, the scope automatically moved to point directly at Saturn.

Fundy and Eret seemed to be quietly talking. They didn’t seem like they were quite *friends* yet, but it looked to Darryl like they were on their way there again.

Darryl grinned, “Zak c’mere.”

He made an irritated noise, yawning. “What is it-”

Zak paused as he saw the ringed planet through the telescope, in incredible detail. He could pick out individual moons, individual rings and bands of gas in the atmosphere.

“Holy shit.” Zak breathed, looking up to meet Darryl’s gaze.

Darryl giggled, “I’m going to let that one pass.”

Now it was *Zak* who was grinning wildly, “*Show-me-more-show-me-more-*”

“Ok, muffin,” Darryl clicked a few buttons, and the telescope panned to the left, and slightly up. Zak recognized it was pointed near Orion, but not much else.

“Which planet-”

“Not a planet this time,” Darryl corrected him, “This is the Orion Nebula.”

Zak dashed back to the eyepiece, staring in amazement.

“How come you’ve never shown me this-”

“You didn’t exactly *let me*, ” Darryl laughed, “This is the first time I’ve convinced you to look in an actual telescope.”

“I thought it’d be boring and stuff,” Zak said, still looking at the nebula, “But dude, this is-”

“Beautiful?” Darryl finished for him, “Mm. I guess looking at the stars really *has* taught me what’s beautiful.”

At this, Darryl delicately guided Zak’s face away from the scope and towards his, connecting their lips softly in the starlight.

After a few seconds of gentle connection, Zak broke the kiss.

“D-did you just...” He laced his hands behind Darryl’s back, “Did you just try a cheesy compliment on me?”

“Did it work?” Darryl smiled, looking into his partner’s eyes.

Zak went a bit red, “I-- I guess so,”

“I hate to interrupt,” Eret’s voice monotoned, “But strudel boy and I-”

“*Don’t call me that!*” Fundy laughed, “Just because I’m Dutch doesn’t mean I’m a strudel-boy...”

Zak grinned from over Darryl’s shoulder, “Oh, we’re *never* forgetting that one.”

Fundy made a strangled sort of frustrated noise, playing with his tail. “Ok fine, Mr... Mr Flashlight, get it, because your eyes glow-”

“Fundy,” Eret sighed, gazing back to the ginger’s eyes, “That’s literally so stupid-”

The fox met Eret’s eyes.

Eret’s only *slightly* glowing, blue-green eyes.

How the hell had he not noticed that?

“Y-your eyes!” Fundy sprang upwards from his seated position, “They’re not glowing anymore, or at least not as much,”

Eret seemed a bit surprised as well. “They’re not?”

“No!” Fundy smiled wide, “They’re not.”

Chapter 54

Chapter Summary

jesus christ that took me a while to upload-- anyway. s o r r y-

It was around three in the morning when the four snuck back in from the bitter October air. Zak had forced his partner to show him virtually everything the sky had to offer; everything from the Andromeda Galaxy to a surprisingly detailed observation of Mars.

Fundy and Eret had seen the way those two were animated, and stepped to the side. They'd talked amongst themselves for the remainder of the outing, lying on their backs on the roof.

The fox had gotten very tired around two-thirty, and Eret had started getting worried that the ginger would fall asleep on the roof. They elected to go inside not long after, and the other two followed.

Zak watched from the loft as the fox and the mad scientist disappeared into the room they shared with Clay and George.

He turned back to Darryl, "You feeling any better?"

The brunet walked over to him, taking one of Zak's hands in his own. "Much better," he smiled.

The two managed to get back into their pillow fort, this time snuggling up with each other. Zak ended up using Darryl's arm as a pillow, something he would *probably* regret the next morning.

Both of them fell asleep with great ease.

===== ***Morning***

Everyone woke slowly and gently. The first morning at the farmhouse was allowed to be a relaxed one. Little did everyone know, Karl had an airhorn stashed away that he planned to use in future days...

The first to wake was Clay, who had slept the night away while snuggled up against George, laying on his back with an arm around the smaller boy that was curled up against his side. Clay was blankly looking at the ceiling, as if an invisible movie was playing there.

Fundy and Eret were still sleeping. George found it mildly amusing that the fox had built a wall of pillows between the two sides of the bed he and the other blond shared.

“G’mornin’...” Clay smiled as he sensed George’s conscious rising again. “Did you sleep well?”

“Mhm,” George mumbled sleepily, stretching a bit. “You?”

Clay smiled down at the brunet. “Slept fine. Did you get any nightmares?”

George shifted a bit so that he was halfway laying on Clay’s chest, arms folded as a chinrest so that he could look the blond in the eyes. “...did you do the sleep thing again..?”

Eret made a noise from across the room, and the two boys froze.

“We should probably take this to the living room,” Clay whispered amusedly.

George nodded, sitting up and yawning as he stretched his arms to the ceiling. He climbed out of the sheets, absentmindedly watching as Clay did the same. His lover shrugged on a grey t-shirt and exchanged his sweatpants for jeans. There were a lot of clothes that Nick couldn’t really wear anymore, and fortunately he, as well as some of the other scientists were the same size.

George decided to stay in his pajamas.

The shirt was a little small on the blond, but it fit. He trailed his hand along the wall as he and George made their way to the door in the still-dark room. The living room was brighter, soft golden morning sunlight filtering in through red checkered curtains.

The pair laughed a bit to themselves when they heard unmistakeable snoring coming from the loft upstairs. There were a few books lying around on the living room coffee table, so Clay navigated around the sleeping Techno on one of the couches to get to the empty second one.

Schlatt was supposed to be there, but he was apparently out cold on the floor instead.

George grabbed one of the books from the table. Clay plonked down on the white linen couch, leaning back against one of the armrests and sitting sideways.

“Leave some room for me!” George teased quietly, seeing that his legs took up most of the couch.

Clay grinned, leaning over and dragging George to his lap by the brunet’s waist. He let out a surprised yelp, but it didn’t seem to wake anyone up.

He plucked the book from George’s hands, placing his arms so that they were under George’s. Clay held the book in front of the shorter boy’s chest so they could both see.

The book was called *Strange Practice*, a novel about a peculiar doctor by the name of Greta Helsing who tended to the undead.

Looks good enough, George thought.

Oh my fucking god I forgot we could do this-

Clay, you're the one with mind reading abilities.

How did you forget?

Hey, at least we don't have to worry about waking anyone up now.

You're such an absentminded dork-

And you love me for it-!

...Don't call me out like that.

Clay chuckled, his chin resting on the top of George's head. They started reading, just like they'd used to back at Site-19. Every few months they would sneak out of the compound and go to a Barnes 'N Noble that was open all night, spend *hours* looking for books to read, then take their haul back to the Site.

Maybe they could do something similar here. Only this time, George was telepathically making sarcastic comments about the books while they read.

The rest of the house lazily started to wake, people slowly filtering out of their rooms. Sylvee, Zak, and Darryl were the next ones to wake up, chatting quietly up in the loft.

The noise grew louder as Techno and Quackity woke, who both looked very irritated that their sleep had been interrupted. Quackity huffed at the sight of the uninvited guests, but dealt with it anyway.

Karl and Nick emerged next, with the lava hybrid shuffling over to a Keurig for coffee. He looked half-dead, and Clay fought back a laugh at the sight.

Skeppy woke next, with Darryl following close behind.

George pulled his focus from *Strange Practice* and looked around, doing a headcount. Almost everyone was awake, but he couldn't really put his finger on who was missing.

Do you think Nick will let us make breakfast?

George grinned, tilting his head back to look at the mindreader.

The only thing that either of us can make is waffles or scrambled eggs.

Well, that actually sounds pretty good.

...You're right.

We can try and ask..?

George got up quicker than Clay had expected, phasing right through him.

"Hold up-" He laughed, standing and putting an arm around George's shoulder.

Nick, at the moment, was staring into middle space as he sipped from a mug saying “*Rise and Grind.*”

“Hey, uh...” George paused when Nick’s half-dead eyes panned to the brunet. “Clay and I wondered if we could take over the kitchen for now...”

Nick grunted, shuffling to leave the area. He sat down on the couch that Clay and George had just been on, and it curiously didn’t burst into flames.

“How did it-” Clay started.

“Everything in the house is fireproof,” Karl waved a hand in dismissal, “Well, all the fabric things. Sheets, couches, that kind of stuff.”

George started opening cabinet doors, asking Clay to get some of the higher ones.

No waffle-maker.

I guess we got a little used to our own apartment...

We can just make pancakes, I guess.

Not as fun. You know that pancakes are just waffles with no abs.

Yeah, yeah.

And so they set to their cookery, almost moving as a single unit. Everyone else was talking quietly, adding a sort of serene blank background noise.

And for the first time in a while, George could let himself feel at ease.

He felt *safe*.

Chapter 55

===== *The Past*

Sixth period, the last of the first day.

Tommy's shoulders ached from carrying his backpack, filledull to the brim with textbooks and notebooks,, along with even his personal laptop.

Fortunately, he was sitting down to AP Computer Science and Programming;, something Tommy was very much looking forward to.

The dDesks were situated in groups of two, chairs side-by-side at a small table, scattered across the room. Tommy chose a completely unattended set in the backmost cornerer of the room, where hopefully he'd be more out of the way. He'd barely made it before the bell;, Tommy was rather surprised that the back desks hadn't been taken first.

Just as he sat down, the bell rang. Curiously enough, the seat beside him was still empty.

As the teacher started droning on about protocol and *rules* and all those useless bits, Tommy took out his computer. He set his backpack in the seat next to him.

"Oh goodness I'm so late-" aA voice yells from just outside the door to the classroom, a short brunet running in shortly after. "Please, please don't count me tardy, Miss..."

The teacher asked him just *why* he was so late.

The boy frowned., "I might have gotten very, *extremely* , thoroughly lost."

Tommy suppressed a snicker at the state of the boy. He looked flustered, disheveled and *really* embarrassed.

The teacher told him it was fine - , as this was the first day - , and just to sit down.

And of course, the only available seat was right by Tommy.

When he saw this new boy heading straight for him, Tommy hefted his book bag out of the chair and deposited it on the floor beside.

"Sorry," the new guy whispered as the teacher started up again. "This place is a labyrinth..."

Tommy had been at this school for three years, and he hadn't seen this guy yet. "Are you new?"

He nodded, distractedly setting out his own computer. "My name's Toby. Nice to meet you, uh-"

"Tommy," the blond smiled, "Nice to meet you too."

He and Toby conversed quietly for most of the period, until they ended up swapping Discord IDs and using DMs to pass notes.

All too soon, the final bell rang.

“Well Toby,” Tommy began to stand, gathering his things, “I will see you tomorrow.”

“You too, big man.” Toby laughed.

“Correct, I am a very large man.” Tommy grinned as he left.

Toby shrugged his backpack on and followed not long after, making his way home. Maybe this new school wouldn’t be so bad, after all.

=====

It was the next day, and sixth period rolled around again. Turns out these two actually had two or three classes together, but hadn’t noticed each other amidst the influx of new people.

Toby entered class *on time* this time, plunking down in his chair.

“And I thought Year 11 started quickly,” Toby sighed, “I’ve already got tons of homework.”

“Tell me about it,” Tommy grumbled back, flicking hair out of his eyes. Today, the lessons *actually* started, instead of meaningless pleasantries.

The teacher began this time with a lecture about how to use Terminal, to which Toby yawned boredly.

Tommy looked over at him from frantically taking notes, “You’re not writing anything down?”

Toby blinked a few times at him, before turning to his computer. It was a Windows PC, one of the older models.

“What are you-” Tommy mumbled, before seeing Toby’s hands fly across the keys and input what he could only assume was code.

“You ever heard of a Hackintosh?” Toby whispered back to him as he continued typing away.

Tommy shook his head cluelessly.

“Well, basically, it’s when you take really old non-Apple computers, like this,” he gestured judgmentally at his device, “And run the latest MacOS software on it. It’s not *the* hardest thing to do in the world,”

“Whatever gibberish that is says otherwise,” Tommy interjected with a scoff, glancing to the incomprehensible mess.

“I guess,” Toby shrugged, “It’s just a cheap way to build your own Apple computer. You can get old computers, like this one, and rebuild them for gaming and stuff.”

The word *gaming* got Tommy’s interest. “You can game on this thing?”

Toby laughed, “No, not on here, you have to do some extra shenanigans.”

Tommy frowned, “I was going to enjoy playing Rocket League in class.”

“I’ll see what I can do,” Toby grinned.

“I’m going to start calling you Big Hack,” Tommy decided, leaning back in his chair. “Y’know, because I’m a big man, so you’re Big Hack.”

Toby giggled a little bit, drawing the teacher’s attention. “Fine.”

“*Mister Smith.*” The teacher’s words collided with their ears. “What, might I ask, is so important right now?”

“N-nothing, miss. Nothing more important than this.”

She didn’t look convinced. “Then tell me, what is the command *Lls* and what does it do?”

“Oh!” Toby smiled, “*Ls* lists all the contents of the folder you’re in.”

The teacher frowned. “And what about *sudo bash*?”

Toby grinned., Hhe was truly in his element. Tommy, on the other hand, was nervous. As far as he knew, she hadn’t even *talked* about that one.

“Sudo’s kind of like a prefix.,” Toby leaned back in his chair, “It tells the system that you want to run the following command as an admin. *Sudo bash* is just telling the system to open up a little box to run commands in as an admin.”

The teacher looked defeated. She turned away, and Toby let out a sigh he’d been holding.

“Big Hack, you truly live up to the name,.” Tommy joked.

“That’s literally such basic stuff,” Toby replied, “Just wait.”

“Can you hack into the school system?”

Toby frowned, but then smiled. “Probably. Not that I would.”

Tommy smirked, “That means you can’t-”

“Does not!” Toby hissed good-naturedly, nudging Tommy’s side with his elbow.

“Yes it does,” Tommy whispered back. “I bet... twenty bucks that you can’t get into the school system.”

“Make it thirty.”

Tommy raised an eyebrow, “Confident, are we?”

“Mhm.” Toby went back to the string of code he had been working on. “Done it with enough WiFi networks and Netflix accounts.”

“Wh-”

The bell rang at that moment.

“Gotta go!” Toby smiled angelically, rushing off with his backpack.

“See ya,” Tommy called after him, then quieting his voice, “Big Hack.”

Chapter 56

===== *The Past -- Three Weeks Later*

“Another marshmallow?” Tommy asked, absentmindedly fiddling with a racing game on his phone.

“Do you have to even ask?” Toby grinned, reaching up above his head until he felt Tommy plunk a candy there.

The brunet was sitting on the floor of Tommy’s bedroom at one in the morning, his back up against his bed. The room was comfy enough for two, it had vaulted ceilings and was quite spacious.

Tommy was lounging on the mattress, brows furrowed. He let out a sigh as he lost whatever game he was playing, and instead shifted his gaze to the computer Toby had in his hands.

“What are you doing,” He said curiously, rolling to dangle his arms off the bedspread.

“Depends,” Toby responded, “On if you want to watch bootlegged horror movies,”

“That sounds gr-”

“Or,” he continued, cutting the blond off, “if you want to play the new game I just finished coding for the Final.”

Tommy raised his eyebrows, “The Final’s in May, this is August. What’s it called?”

“I thought I’d go ahead and get it done. It’s called Among Us,” He smiled, tilting his head back to see his friend. “It’s wicked fun.”

Tommy hopped off the bed and plopped down beside Toby. “How’s it work?”

“Well, everyone’s stuck on a spaceship,” The shorter boy began, “And there’s Crewmates, and Imposters. Crewmates have these things called tasks, and if everyone finishes their tasks, the Crewmates win. The Imposters just have to kill everyone to win.”

Tommy’s eyes glinted with mischievous light. “I get to stab people?”

“Indeed you do,” Toby sighed happily, “If you get Imposter.”

Tommy grinned devilishly, but faltered when he saw Toby looking a bit disheartened.

“What’s wrong?” Tommy handed his friend another marshmallow from the jumbo bag he held.

“The game’s meant for lots of people,” Tubbo frowned, “But it’s just us.”

Tommy scoffed, grinning as he jumped up from the bed and dashed over to his monitor setup in the corner of his room. “You forget about the *big man server*,”

Toby rolled his eyes, “Did you really need to call it that?”

“Yes,” Tommy puffed out his chest, “For we are big men!”

“M’k,” Toby chuckled, “If you say so. Are you going to wake all of them up though?”

“You bet,” Tommy smirked, “You have a game to test, and their sleep schedule is screwed anyway.

He started typing away at the discord chat;

insert image

Wilbur, of course, got Imposter first, and promptly murdered Tommy. He denied it, despite having stabbed him in front of both Dave and Will.

They ended up playing Among Us for the rest of the night, staying up until three in the morning murdering others and being murdered in turn.

Tommy ended up falling asleep at his gaming setup, to which he was promptly decapitated by Phil.

Toby sighed, logging off his computer. His eyes were almost shutting on their own...

And so, the two boys ended up falling asleep in places that would *very much* hurt their backs when they woke.

Tommy: yo

Wilbur: what does the gremlin want

Tommy: shut up old man

Tommy: my friend has a game he wants us to try

Techno: what is it

Will: join vc?

Tommy: yes

Techno: do i get to stab

Tubbo: yes. Its a murdwr game

Tommy: MURDER

Tubbo: anyway i'm gonna send the link in general so jstu join with the code i give ok

Philza: hey, what are you guys doing up at 1AM

Techno: idk man its like 7 here seems pretty reasonable to me

Phil: ...timezones...

Techno: ...shit.

Wilbur: did you forget time exists?

Tubbo: the code's *[REDACTED]*

Phil: thanks tubbo! Joining. Code looks good btw

Tubbo: thanks :D

Tommy: joinjoinjoinjoinjoinjoin

Will: im gonna stab tommy

Tubbo: you dont even know how the game works o_0

Will: can i kill tommy?

Phil: wilbur uh-

Tubbo: yes :eyes:

Will: then im going to fucken murder him

Tommy: Big W, I am very worried

Techno: welcome to anxiety, kid.

Tommy: JOIN

Tubbo: :D everyone's here

Tubbo: enjoy plz :)

Chapter 57

===== *The Past -- Four Days Later*

It was about 11PM on a Sunday, and Tommy Simmons was for once asleep when he was supposed to be.

Unfortunately for him, that wouldn't last long.

Plunk!

The first pebble only gained a disgruntled utterance from the sleeping Tommy.

Clink!

The second hit against the glass of Tommy's window woke him more, returning to consciousness with a snort.

"What is going on..." He grumbled as a third pebble found its mark.

He threw open the curtains of his window, looking out curiously. Imagine his surprise when he saw Toby, standing outside, readying yet another stone.

"What the hell do you want-" Tommy hissed as he opened the window and stuck his head out. He could only just make out Toby's form, various yellowing leaves from a nearby oak tree obscuring his view.

"Tommy!" The brunet broke into a smile. "Tommy I need your help,"

The blond shook his head, "It can wait till morning..."

"No!" Toby almost shouted, quieting his voice at the last second. "Just... let me explain? There's not much time-"

Alarmed by the urgency in his friend's voice, Tommy nodded.

Toby grinned and started scaling the oak tree. They'd used this method once, to sneak out during a different sleepover to go watch a new movie at the cinema. Luckily they both knew how to climb trees.

Once Toby was inside, which was more difficult than usual because of the backpack he was wearing, the brunet caught his breath before starting to explain.

"Oh gosh, Tommy- I think I did something I shouldn't have."

Tommy looked up in alarm, "What did you do?"

"Well, I was doing some research into MI6 for a project in civics class-"

“I think I know where this is going.”

“Anyway, I figured, what better way is there to learn about a government intelligence agency than to get into the agency itself.”

Tommy face-palmed himself. “Tell me you didn’t...”

“So, I kinda- sorta-,” Toby took a deep breath before rushing his words nervously, “-managed to worm my way into a top secret government agency.”

“That’s a nice way to say *hacked*,” Tommy scoffed, “But why are you at my house? With a *backpack*? ”

Toby’s eyes widened and he took the bag off his back before opening it. “Well um, I got into MI6, y’see, and found this weird *thing* .”

Tommy raised an eyebrow. “This is sounding more and more made-up by the minute, Big Hack.”

“No-no I promise,” Toby shook his head, clearing his throat. “Just look.”

He pulled his computer from the bag, along with what looked like a black box with antennae on the side.

“Just a portable Wi-Fi generator,” Toby reassured his friend as he logged in and clicked a few things. As he turned the computer around for Tommy to see, a login screen popped up.

insert login page

“This is what I found,” Toby bit his lip as he proceeded to fill out the “User” and “ID” fields.

“What are you doing?” Tommy shifted to see the computer better.

“Logging in,” Toby muttered.

“Wha-”

“Ok look,” Toby said, scrolling to a place on the side of some sort of website.

American Branch.

French Branch.

English Branch.

“It’s international,” Toby started, playing with his hands absentmindedly. “And it’s connected to MI6, which means governmental. But if I did digging and found some sort of secret *international* agency, then what the heck did it mean? What does SCP stand for? Why does it need a Foundation?”

“Toby, I love hearing you rant about random things, like you did about bees that one time-”

“Oh, I *do* love bees!”

“-but you’re going to have to cut to the chase. Why are you at my house, in the middle of the night, with a backpack?”

Toby smiled and smacked his forehead, as if he’d forgotten something.

“Oh! Because I discovered all this about 9 this morning and now there are men in black vans watching my house!”

Tommy’s eyes went wide, “*What?!* ”

Toby shrugged, “One of them knocked on the front door, so I snuck out through the backyard.”

“And you didn’t think to tell me this,” Tommy said incredulously, “-until *now*?”

“It didn’t really seem important,”

Tommy leaned back, dragging his hands down his face. “Toby, what the *fuuuu-*”

“So I ran here,” he interrupted, “At least we live pretty close.”

“Do you know why there were probably *government agents* at your door?” Tommy asked.

His friend shrugged, “Most likely because I just broke into a top secret international agency.”

Through the open window, they heard cars park and car doors slam.

Toby whipped his head around to look at Tommy, “Do they know I’m here?”

That question was answered by a sharp knock on the door, followed by the obnoxious dings of the doorbell.

“Shit,” Tommy spat, seeing the lights in the hallway outside turn on as the knocking continued, relentless.

He vaguely heard his mother walk past his bedroom door.

“Stay here,” He told the brunet, sneaking out of his bedroom door.

Tommy quietly followed his mother through the hall, down the stairs, and stopped when he was just out of sight of the front door.

A mellifluous voice sounded when Tommy’s mum answered the knocking.

“Hello. We’re looking for Toby Smith. Could he be here?”

Tommy gasped.

The man in the doorway peered over sunglasses into the house at the noise. Tommy saw him and bolted back upstairs, and back to his room.

“They’re looking for you,” he spluttered, shutting his door and locking it behind him. “They asked my *mother* if you were here.”

Toby’s eyes widened. “We have to leave,”

“We can’t exactly leave through the back door!” Tommy hissed as he turned away to run a hand through his hair, “We’d have to get downstairs, and that *man* would see us.”

When he turned back around, he only just saw Toby’s leg disappearing out the window.

“C’mon!” Toby whisper-shouted, “We can get down this way!”

Tommy paused, but then nodded. He grabbed his school backpack and stuffed random things into it, his laptop, phone, a few shirts, underwear, jeans. A solar-powered charger he’d bought for a camping trip.

Toby, in the meantime, shimmied back down the tree. Once he was on the ground, he shouted up.

“Throw me the backpack!”

Tommy sighed irritably, “Don’t drop it!”

Fortunately the backpack made a safe landing, and Tommy started his descent.

“*Check around the house!*”

That call sounded from the same deep voice that Tommy had heard earlier. He snatched his backpack, and grabbed Toby’s arm.

“Run.”

The two of them dashed off into a nearby treeline, as Tommy’s house was on the edge of a well-wooded park.

Once they were obscured from view, Toby watched anxiously as men in black suits spilled from the front of the house.

“*This way!*” one of them said, a slender yet tall man, the one who wore the sunglasses. He was looking at some sort of weird iPad, which was beeping obnoxiously and *apparently* leading the man straight to them.

Tommy yanked at his friend’s arm again, “We have to go!”

As they ran through the undergrowth, Toby heard the beginnings of a pursuit behind them.

“Do you believe me *now?*”

“NOT THE TIME, BIG HACK!” Tommy yelled.

They finally reached a clearing, bursting into it like bulls in a china shop -- they’d run quite far.

“Can we...” Tommy huffed, leaning over to rest his hands on his knees, “Stop here... for a bit..?”

Toby nodded and caught his breath. “Not for long... c’mon...”

“Over here!”

White lighting of adrenaline shot through Tommy’s brain. “Go go go-”

They started off again, barely making it to the other end of the clearing before some of what they presumed were *agents* found them.

“Right here!”

“How are they tracking us?!” Toby shrieked.

“No *bloody idea!*” Tommy shouted right back.

“Gentlemen!”

The voice again.

Toby slowed down a little in fatigue, but Tommy grabbed his arm and dragged him along. “We can’t slow down, Big Hack, c’mon...”

“We can negotiate this.”

“Tommy we can’t outrun them-”

“We have to try!”

Toby stopped in his tracks, yanking the blond with him. “We have to try and talk to them, there’s no way we’re getting out of this otherwise.”

They were both flushed from fight-or-flight and the cool of the night, tired from running.

“Ah! I see you’ve stopped. A wise choice.”

“What do you want?” Tommy turned and called behind him, to face the man with the sunglasses walking towards them.

“To talk with the one who compromised our database.”

Tommy looked back at his friend, who was staring onward with wide eyes.

“That’s me,” the blond frowned, stepping forward a bit. “I did that.”

Toby gasped, “Tommy no-”

Twisting to smile back at his friend, Tommy whispered, “Just let me do this, Big Hack.”

“No-!”

“I’m afraid not,” the man smiled. *“Although your bravery is noted.”*

He held up whatever tracker pad he was using, which was very clearly pointing toward Toby, and not Tommy.

“How did you find me?” Toby asked, coming forward a bit to hold onto Tommy’s arm.

“Did you really think we wouldn’t trace the laptop that broke into our system?”

“Who’s ‘we’?” Toby continued, his curiosity getting the best of him.

The man laughed. *“Do you really want to know?”*

“Yes!”

Unknown to the two boys, who were focused on the strange man, other agents were closing in around them.

The man stepped a little closer.

“My name is Eret.”

Toby grinned, glancing to Tommy. “See,” he whispered, “I think we’re getting somewhere!”

“I think you know by now, but we are the SCP Foundation.”

“But what do you *do*?” Toby said, forgetting his surroundings for a moment.

Tommy didn’t like this. He *really* didn’t like this.

“Secure, Contain, Protect.”

“So that’s what it stands for,” Toby muttered to himself. “It still doesn’t answer my question.”

“You’re a curious one,” Eret smiled. *“We like to see that in new recruits.”*

“R-recruits?” Toby’s gaze snapped to the sunglassed man.

He nodded. *“You got into our system and told your little friend here. It just... wouldn’t do... to have you two running around.”*

Toby snapped out of his naïve stupor. “Oh, shit.”

“No *kidding*!” Tommy yanked on his arm again. “Run!”

"I think you'll find you're surrounded."

And indeed they were.

Tommy instinctively stepped in front of Toby, but didn't really do so effectively as there were enemies on every side.

"Big man, I don't think we're getting out of this..." Toby took his friend by the shoulders and forced him to look the brunet in the eye. "I... I'm so *stupid*,"

"No, no. Don't say that," Tommy sighed as the circle of agents constricted around them, "You're... you're one of the smartest people I know."

"R-really?"

"I'm afraid I'm going to have to cut this short."

Zzt!

Tommy felt something nick his ear, then a rivulet of blood start to trickle down. Something had grazed him.

"Shitshitshit-" Tommy was starting to panic, his grip tightening on Toby's arms.

"Hey," Toby was starting to choke up. "Tommy, in case we don't get out of this alive, or something-"

Eret drew nearer, and another *something* flew past Toby's head.

Thank goodness for terrible aim.

"I-if we don't," Toby stuttered, struggling to get words out, "Tommy, I'm *scared*,"

At this, Tommy simply hugged his friend to him. "I'm so sorry *I'm so sorry*..."

Zzt!

This time, a feathered dart pinned Toby in the center of his spine.

"T-tommy..." He faltered, starting to go a little limp.

"Oh my god- no-no- *no-no*-"

Toby was a bit too heavy, and the two boys sank to the damp grass beneath them.

"Oh, fine. I'll do this myself."

Eret walked towards the boys. Toby was starting to lose consciousness.

"Tommy I-" He was smiling softly as light faded from his eyes, "L-lo..."

He disappeared into the deep.

Tommy held his friend in his arms as he felt a hypodermic needle sink into his neck.

As he collapsed to the ground, he got out a few final words.

“L-love you too... b-big hack...”

And then it all went dark.

Chapter 58

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

===== ***One Day Later.***

“How in the hell-” Quackity began, leaning against a wooden plank to hold it in place.

Techno walked up to him again, arms full with yet more baskets of potatoes. He shrugged, “They know one of their own.”

Quackity rolled his golden eyes. “Whatever you say, Hybrid.”

The dark-haired boy went back to putting the final slats on the new shed. Techno frowned when Quackity turned. He really didn’t like whenever people referred to him as *Hybrid*, it just reminded him of the *presumably* broken chip in the back of his neck.

Over the last day, a lot had happened. Schlatt had woken up, to which Sylvee almost knocked him out again.

He seemed just as confused as anyone else, maybe a little more so.

Charlie helped out more than Techno had expected, largely helping him and Quackity build up the shed. The corn demon was still a bit unsettling at times, with his glowing red eyes and Dream-like black form.

Quite literally, he was like a black-and-red version of Dream. Without the shapeshifting aspect, one would suppose.

“Are we almost done?” Techno sighed, blowing a strand of hair from his face for the thousandth time that day.

“Mhm,” the other man responded, “Just this plank.”

Techno nodded and ducked inside, setting the baskets he was holding down on long rows of bench-like shelves.

“You and Charlie really did well on this,” Techno smiled, trying to spark conversation.

“We’ve had to do a lot of renovation,” was the reply.

=====

Nick was finally starting to wake up around noon, with about four cups of coffee in him. He was seated at the kitchen counter, looking over the morning paper he’d somehow managed to not set on fire.

“Are you normally this grumpy?” Karl teased, flicking his boyfriend’s nose as he leaned across the counter.

“Yes, ” Nick grumbled, smiling a little involuntarily. “S’more coffee, please.”

The dark blond laughed, taking his mug. “You’ve got to wake up eventually, hothead.”

“Mmm.”

Karl rolled his eyes, “Alba’s getting along really well with Tubbo.”

“Good,” Nick said, “Because we’re staying for as long as humanly possible.”

The man turned, raising an eyebrow. “Oh?”

Nick propped up his head on one of his palms. “If you still want me, Dr. Jacobs.”

“Is that even a question?” Karl laughed, “I’m just waiting for you to, uh, be able to *control* that lava a little more.”

“And then-?” Nick wiggled his eyebrows.

“Well,” Karl returned to the countertop, leaning over and dropping his voice. “I’ll-”

“Hey guys!” Sylvee interrupted, pulling out a barstool to sit next to Nick. “I know most everyone’s got stuff to do, is there something that needs attending to around the house?”

Karl leaned back, putting a reasonable distance between himself and Nick again.

“The kids went adventuring into the trees down by the bridge,” Karl began, “If you could keep an eye on them, that would be great.”

Sylvee nodded, “On it!”

As she left, Nick turned his gaze back to Karl. “The kids? Are we parents now?”

The blond smiled softly, “In a way, I guess. Lucius missed you like crazy,”

“And I missed him,” Nick frowned. Cautiously, he moved his hand to rest on top of Karl’s. When there were no screams of pain and burning flesh, Nick smiled. “How’s that for control?”

The tips of Karl’s ears flushed bright red, “We uh- we’ll see, hothead.”

Nick got up from the barstool, walking away to do something or other.

Karl sighed and left the kitchen, running a hand through his hair. He made his way to the downstairs bathroom, which luckily was unoccupied.

His hand was trembling a bit as he opened the door, and hurriedly closed it behind him.

"I'm fine," He whispered shakily. *"I'm fine."*

He placed a hand on either side of the sink, looking into his reflection's eyes.

He blinked. Then he blinked the other way, a secondary eyelid closing and opening.

He wondered how long he could keep up this charade, with Nick showing signs of wanting... intimacy.

His appearance rippled, then settled back to Karl.

Blinking sideways one last time, he fixed his hair and returned to the living room.

Chapter End Notes

ohmigod i forgot i put this particular character in here-

(note: the whole *cough* controversy regarding said shapeshifter character hadn't happened yet when I wrote this)

(Let's just say..... bye sisters)

Chapter 59

Chapter Notes

AIGHT FOLKS. Here's how it's gonna motherfuckin go.
It's me. Y'author. back at it again

i decided to uh... change some... things-
you wamppad re-readers never got a chance to finish the full story.

So I have this clue for you, my dears.

Think you have what it takes to solve my riddles?

Read till the end of the chapters to find out ;)

Segment One. ===== The Past.

This is a mistake.

I know it is.

It has to be.

This just... it can't be right.

He clutches at his head, a hand slamming on the desk beside him to keep upright.

"What the fuck is wrong with me?!" he shouts to the empty room.

What have I become?

He looks to the unassuming vial that rests in a row of capped test tubes on a rack. It is completely clear, only a little thicker than water. This simple liquid had been the fruits of his labour for what- months? Time didn't really seem relevant.

He knows what it could do. He knows what *he* could do.

There's an empty syringe near his hand, not yet used.

"No, no-" he hisses to himself.

I can't.

This can't be right-

What am I even doing?

His glance flickers to the syringe, to the vial, and to his left arm, sleeve rolled up to the elbow.

Bzzzt!

"Doctor, we need you to stop." A metallic voice rings from his earbud. *"Doctor, do you copy?"*

He rips the wretched device from his ear. "Fuck this."

Shakily, almost feverishly, he takes up the syringe and pushes it through the corked vial. Couldn't inject his bloodstream with bubbles, now could he?

He watches as nearly half of his *project* is drawn up into the syringe. What is it going to even do to him?

"Shit," he curses his trembling hands. He has to do this. He pauses for a few moments, letting his hands stabilize. He raises the needle level with his arm, finding a vein there-

"DOCTOR!" The harsh voice calls again, but this time it's not from the earbud, it's from right outside the lab door. *"DOCTOR, PUT DOWN THE SYRINGE."*

He breaks down in a sob, the tremors returning.

"You *don't understand*-" he cries out, pressing the tip of the needle into his skin. "I have to do this-"

Pushing aside his hesitation, he shoves the instrument into his vein and squeezes with all his strength, staring as the clear liquid drains into him. Immediately his ears ring, nearly drowning out the sound of the door being knocked off its hinges.

Black starts to dance at the edges of his vision.

Shit.

What have I done-

He sways on his feet before collapsing completely, losing his grip on the needle. The syringe clatters to the ground, empty. His shoulder hits the tile with a dull thud, the left side of his head striking the floor.

He dimly sees a few pairs of Foundation-regulation footwear hurrying around him urgently, before he's rolled onto his back by a rough pair of hands.

A man's face appears in his blurry vision, platinum blond hair obscuring worried eyes.

The doctor smiles.

"I-" He gasps, a sharp pain stabbing at the inside of his elbow. "I'm..."

The man's eyes widen as he notices his veins, a glowing neon color.

"What have you *done*?" he commands, his normally warm voice turning dark.

"Ch-changed..." The doctor grins, his eyes starting to roll to the back of his head. "T-the world."

Segment Two. ===== The Present.

"Where the hell am I?" Karl screams into the darkness. "*ANSWER ME!*"

All he remembered was coming back to the gate after getting Will's brace, getting out of the truck, unlocking the gate, and then...

Well, he remembered getting shoved into the livewire fence.

He'd only woken up an hour ago, maybe two. Time was hard to keep track of when there was literally nothing to go off of.

Based on how hungry he was, he'd say that he'd been in this *room* for... a day? Probably.

He collapsed against the wall again, at least grateful there was a wall to lean on. His entire body ached, especially the thin lines of second-degree electrical burns that ran along his face, arms, and torso where he'd hit the wire.

Some sort of door opened -- but the sudden light hit Karl's eyes like blades, causing him to close them again.

A new person was shoved in, then the door closed again. Darkness wrapped back around Karl's vision.

"Hello?" He called out quietly, hearing some signs of life from the other person.

"*D-dad?*" The person responds, his voice breaking. Karl knew that voice.

"Oh my god, Anthony," Karl widened his eyes as far as they'd go, but he couldn't see the boy. "Are you ok? Did someone hurt you-"

"*I'm f-fine,*" He sniffed. "*I- I can s-see.*"

Anthony shifted over to sit beside Karl, who put an arm around him when they were close enough to know where the other was.

"We're going to get out of here," Karl promised with a watery tone, "I promise."

The catboy nodded in the dark.

Oh god, Nick... Karl thought, Please hurry.

Segment Three. ===== The Past.

Agent B was quite bored, really. It had been so long since he'd had a real assignment to dig into, a real *character* .

That was, until today.

"Agent, come in." An accented man's voice buzzed in his ear. *"We have an assignment for you. Long-term, undercover. Meet me on the helipad."*

He smiled as he responded, "On my way, sir."

A few minutes passed, and the Agent found himself on the roof of the Site at which he worked. A chopper was starting up, a familiar blond sitting in the pilot's seat.

The Agent clambered in, sitting beside the man and slipping on a headset.

"Flying today, are we sir?"

"Nothing like it!" The pilot said as the doors to the chopper were closed, and the blades spun faster. "Flying always seems to clear my head. Plus, it's great for mission briefings."

Agent B nodded. "You said it was undercover-"

"I did," the pilot replied as they lifted off the ground, "We need you to... play a character. The risk isn't very high, I'm afraid,"

The Agent scoffed. "What happened to the high-profile missions, Phil?"

"This is just as important," Phil, the pilot, frowned. "We're keeping a particularly dangerous subject under observation as they re-enter the foundation."

"Re-enter?" He quirked an eyebrow, "What they do to get kicked out?"

Phil laughed, "They didn't get kicked out, Agent. Think of it more as a *reset*."

"Mhm." the Agent hummed, crossing his arms as Phil piloted them over picturesque mountain scenery.

"Anyways, here's your character," Phil handed him a folder from somewhere unseen, "The subject will have implanted memories. Do *not* contradict the info in this file, or you risk setting the subject off."

Agent B's eyebrows furrowed as he read through the information. "This character's pretty basic, what's so dangerous about-"

"That's enough questions, B." Phil turned to look at him with green eyes. They held none of their usual good nature.

"Yes, Director Philza sir!" The agent slipped back into formality at his tone.

The flight was only supposed to last fifteen minutes- but Phil kept going.

Agent B started to get nervous.

"Where are we going?" He asked, fidgeting with the file in his lap.

"The assignment," Phil smiled, "You're starting today."

The Agent shifted in his seat. He didn't question it. He was headed off to who knows where, to do an assignment that he was questioning very much.

What in the hell was happening?

Hey. Jay here-

My discord is jay(●~♪)#3394 for those of you who want to partake in the riddles challenge to get a sneak peek at the plot.

Fuvsg lbhe jvyy naq oraq lbhe gvzr
Grzcgvat, lbh, gur guerr Sngrf' eulzr
Pbhag gb guerr, Ntragf P naq O,
Lbh'yy jnag gb ybbx pybfryl
Ng Puncgre Guvegl-Guerr.

There's your riddle!

DM me on discord if you think you have the answer ;)

Supplementary Log: Emily's Debut

===== *The Past.*

"It'll be ok, I promise," Clay's smile turned watery.

The girl in the hospital bed shook her head slightly. "Don't lie to me."

She coughed weakly, reaching out a hand. There were IV lines running from shunts in her wrist.

Clay took it gladly, squeezing as tight as he trusted himself to.

"I'll make it ok." He whispered.

A doctor appeared by Clay's arm.

"Mr. Anderson, we're going to have-"

"*Doctor* Anderson. I have two degrees in biochemistry and neuroscience." Clay retorted. Clay let go of his sister's hand as he dragged the doctor out of her earshot.

"Don't bullshit me like you did to my mother," Clay hissed, "What the hell is going to happen to her?"

The doctor seemed at a loss for words. They finally spoke, "Sir, we... we don't even really know what's wrong. Her own antibodies are attacking her body,"

"That's an autoimmune disorder, what the fuck is wrong with this hospital-"

"Sir, it's not that," The doctor looked around nervously, "It's attacking it, sure, but it's... changing her."

They both glanced back to the barely-teenage girl on the hospital bed.

"Changing her?" Clay's voice dropped an octave.

"Look," The doctor sighed, "I shouldn't be showing you this..."

They brought out two scans of an electron microscope. The one on the left was of a sample of healthy red blood cells, labelled to be taken from Clay's sister. The right was almost unrecognizable.

"The first test was taken a week ago," The doc pointed to the left image, "And this was two days ago."

The cells looked *corrupted*, like some force had taken them over. They'd gone from red to lime green, full of white spikes.

"It's taking over her entire system," The doctor sighed frustratedly, "Her blood is *green*, all her organs are changing, her brain-

"Let me help." Clay brought the scans closer to see more detail. "I'm a biologist, I'm good with this shit. And, she's my damn sister."

The doctor glanced around to make sure no one was watching. "I can't... I can't exactly let you barge in on one of the strangest cases I've ever seen. But..."

Clay got out his Foundation badge.

"Level Three clearance."

The doctor looked a bit taken aback. "You're one of *them*."

Clay raised an eyebrow, but before he could ask questions the doctor started racing off.

"Where are you *going*?" Clay whisper-shouted.

They didn't respond until both of them reached a storage closet.

"Sample cupboard," The doctor explained. With the swipe of a keycard, they were in.

Rows of boxes lined shelved walls, coolers, vials.

"Here," The doctor got a particular mini-cooler down from a top-shelf. They opened the box, and wisps of liquid nitrogen wafted out.

Six test tubes full of lime green blood stood in the cooler.

"Take this one," The doctor pressed the last one into Clay's hand, "They won't know it's missing."

"Why are you helping me?" Clay asked, grabbing onto the doctor's arm.

The doctor smiled, "I'm a friend of a friend."

"What-" Clay sputtered as the doctor put the cooler back on its shelf. "At least tell me your name!"

The doc smiled. "Dr. Soot. Wilbur Soot."

Clay shook the man's outstretched hand.

"Now go," Wilbur ushered him out the door, "She'll be safe here."

Clay nodded gratefully. He raced back to his sister, who he quickly kissed on the forehead before dashing off.

“I’ll see you tomorrow, Emily.” Clay smiled, holding the vial tight in his hand.

“See ya, loser.” She laughed quietly.

“Later, nerd.”

Chapter 61

===== *The Present.*

Karl sighed. “We’ll find him, Armstrong.”

Nick raised an eyebrow. Just *Armstrong*? The last time he’d called Karl just *Jacobs*, he’d gotten a talking to about how “*he worked for those PHDs, and he’d be damned if anyone said his last name without the ‘Dr’.*”

“Thanks, Mr. Jacobs.” Nick tested. Something was very amiss with his boyfriend- but he needed to be sure.

Karl simply smiled, and returned to another conversation elsewhere.

Nick frowned, his lava flaring from orange to a brighter yellow in concern. Last he’d seen Karl (which was only last month), that same remark nearly cost him his daily coffee.

Maybe I should ask him what’s wrong. Nick thought, *maybe I’m just paranoid.*

“Sorry-” Nick heard a voice right as someone bumped into him, he realized it was Clay.

Nick got an idea upon seeing his mind-reader friend.

“Hey, Clay...” He said, his voice low. “Can you help me with something?”

The blond scratched at the back of his neck, “I mean sure, but-”

“I think something’s wrong with Karl.”

Clay’s brows furrowed with concern. “Why do you think that?”

Nick sighed frustratedly, “He’s just acting... odd. I just want you to like... check in on him? I’m probably just overreacting-”

Clay frowned, “I hope you’re not asking me to spy in his head.”

“No no, of course not,” Nick backtracked. Of course, that was exactly what he’d been asking.

After a few moments of pause, Clay spoke again. “I can... I can look in *quickly*. Just to make sure he’s ok, but beyond that I think is wrong. Privacy, y’know?”

Nick nodded. “Thanks.”

Clay closed his green eyes for a brief moment as he reached out to Karl’s mind.

Shortly after, his eyes flashed open in alarm. Clay dragged Nick by the arm away from everyone else, a sense of pained urgency in his expression.

“Woah-” Nick sputtered out as they came to a jarring halt, “What’s wrong?! Is he ok? Did I do something-”

“Nick, listen to me.” Clay put a hand on his non-lava’d shoulder. “Karl is... I don’t know where he is.”

“What?” Nick scoffed and pointed over his shoulder, “He’s right there.”

“No-” Clay pinched the bridge of his nose. “God, I’ve got the worst headache-”

“You did get turned into Kentucky Fried Clay a few days ago.”

“Nick, listen. Karl’s somewhere dark, you can’t even see. He’s scared as fuck.”

Cold fear started to grip at the lava-boy’s heart. “W-what do you mean?”

The blond closed his eyes again, “I’m going to find more.”

A few moments later, “He’s with someone... I think it’s Anthony.”

“Oh my god.”

“Hey, are you ok?” Karl walked up behind them, a soft grin on his face.

Nick turned on a dime, wheeling around to face him.

“I- I’m fine, babe.” He plastered on a fake smile. “Just worried about Anthony.”

Karl nodded, “So am I. We’re doing a sweep of the property in a couple minutes, ok?”

“Mhm!” Nick agreed, his voice breaking.

Karl raised an eyebrow, but he left.

As soon as he was out of earshot, Nick resumed panicking.

“If Karl’s down in the pits of the night or something,” He pulled at his hair, “Then who the hell is *that*?”

Clay reached out with his mind again, speaking while he did so. “...I have no idea. He’s- he’s got a lot of harmful intent.”

“In English.”

“Nick,” Clay opened his eyes again. “That’s not Karl. And whoever it is...”

They both gazed towards the imposter, who was drifting between groups of housemates.

“Whoever it is, they want to hurt us.”

Supplementary Log: Diner Deja-Vu

===== *The Past.*

George didn't really know why his project manager assigned him to an obscure diner in Kansas. Nonetheless, there he was; early morning and tired as hell.

As if the mission couldn't be any more unclear, he didn't even really have an objective. He was just... sent here. A couple of his colleagues (he wouldn't necessarily call them *friends*...) usually got assignments like this, and came back with a few new recruits. Had he really become so useless in his practice that he was assigned to *recruitment* duty?

The urgent growling of George's stomach snapped him out of his daze.

God, I need food.

Well, he *was* at a diner, after all. The normal bustling and busying of customers brought a scattering of dim conversation, imbuing the space with a dream-like atmosphere drenched in a mix of nostalgia and déjà-vu.

He left his duffle bag and windbreaker in a booth before wandering to a nearby buffet table. Toast, eggs, sausage, biscuits... nothing sparked his appetite.

Oh!

He smiled as he found a stack of lightly-steaming waffles beside a jar of nutella and a canister of whipped cream.

Now- he wasn't much of a nutella person. So instead, he virtually smothered the waffle in whipped cream -- how George was still as slender as he was, he had no idea.

Fudge sauce! Lovely-

With a plate piled with diabetes-fuel, he started heading back to his booth.

Zzzt. Zzzt-zzt.

His phone started going off in his back pocket.

Cautiously, he balanced his plate in one hand before answering the call.

"George Davidson-" He frowned.

"I trust you find your surroundings pleasant."

"Oh hey, sir," George sighed, recognizing his project manager's voice.

"Your target is approaching."

George took the phone away from his ear, wondering if he heard that correctly.

“Sir, what do you mean, ‘*target*’? I’m a doctor, not a hitman-”

“*Watch your step, Davidson.*”

“Wha-”

Wham!

At that moment, he rammed right into another person, focused on their phone as well.

“Oh my *god*-” George gasped as he not only dropped his phone, but accidentally tipped his plate into the shirt of the other person.

George looked up (and then had to keep looking up) to see a blond man with startlingly green eyes grimacing down at him.

“Well damn,” the stranger sighed, somehow managing to laugh at the same time. “Quite an entrance.”

“I’m *so sorry*-” George grabbed some napkins from a nearby table, “Here, I-”

The blond caught George’s wrists before he could attack the mess of toppings on his shirt. “Dude, it’s fine.”

George grumbled incoherent words of apology, stooping to pick up his phone.

Suddenly he remembered what his manager had said leading up to the *incident*.

Your target is approaching.

Did that mean-

“Kinda ruined your breakfast,” the stranger snapped George out of his thoughts. “Can I buy you something to make up for it?”

“I’m the one who should be buying *you* breakfast.” George ran a hand through his hair. “I bumped right into you.”

The blond finished wiping off as much of the stain as he could, then extended his slightly sticky hand to George. “Clay,” he smiled warmly.

The brunet took it. “George.”

The next minutes were a daze of reclaiming their breakfast (both of them electing to have the meal George had chosen the first time), and sitting back down to their booth.

Sliding into the booth across from him, Clay started to talk while George ate.

“What brings you to east Kansas?” Clay quirked an eyebrow.

“Could ask you the same thing,” George mumbled through a mouthful of waffle.

Clay shrugged. “Don’t really know why. Just had to... get away, y’know? I’m not really headed anywhere.”

George nodded. “I get that.”

“College is getting really stressful,” Clay sighed. “Thought I’d hit the road. Relax for a bit.”

“What are you majoring in?” George rested his cheek on his hand.

“Programming and biotech,” Clay munched on a bite of breakfast.

Now *that* piqued George’s interest. “Biotech?”

“Mhm,” Clay continued blithely, “I just really like science. Thinking of dropping out, though.”

Maybe *that’s* what his manager meant when he said *target*. George wasn’t supposed to do anything to Clay, he was supposed to *recruit* him.

Or at least, George hoped so.

“Dropping out?” George quizzed, “Why?”

Clay sighed deeply, “It just seems like a waste of time. Education is important, of course, but I don’t feel like I’m doing anything fundamental.”

George decided to try his luck.

“Well, I work for a company,” He started, “We’re largely a science-based foundation, specializing in research.”

Clay looked up from his plate in interest. “Like, labs?”

George grinned and nodded excitedly, “I’m a surgeon myself.”

The blond scanned George up and down skeptically. “A surgeon? Pardon me if I’m rude, but you don’t look old enough to have gone through medical school.”

George laughed it off, “There’s a different on-site coursework. It’s not like I exactly work on humans.”

After he said that, he almost regretted it. Had he given away too much?

“Oh,” Clay smiled in understanding, “You’re a veterinary type company. That’s cool, but I really want to change the world with my work.”

George rolled his eyes in frustration. “That’s not it either. Look, it’s super hard to explain, especially here of all places.”

Clay looked at him quizzically, “What do you mean?”

George spotted a familiar black Chevy Suburban pulling up outside.

His phone buzzed again.

“Sorry, have to take this...” George apologized before answering the call.

“Good job, Davidson.”

“Sir? I-”

“He’s interested. Offer a meet-up, and leave.”

“Uh- yes, sir.”

The call disconnected, and George frowned.

“You called him sir?” Clay questioned, “You working for the military?”

George pinched the bridge of his nose. “Not exactly...”

“You do surgery on Area 51 aliens or something?” Clay laughed.

George let out a nervous laugh, his voice breaking in the middle. “N-not at all!”

Clay immediately noticed the tone of his voice.

“Wait, wh-”

“I’ve got to go, Clay.” George kept his focus on the van outside of the window. He grabbed a pen from his jacket and scribbled down an address on a nearby napkin.

“If you’re interested in the job, meet me here, 7pm tonight.” George slid him the napkin.

“George, where-”

“Sorry!” George already had his duffel and jacket over his shoulder, walking down the aisle between rows of booths. “Gotta run!”

Clay watched in confusion as George got into the passenger seat of a dark van, which then sped off.

His green eyes sparkled with misplaced curiosity. Clay thought to himself;

Who is this guy?

And why did he want me?

Chapter 63

===== *The Past.*

“Good lord,” Nick spat, as the heavens seemed to open above him in the beginnings of a summer’s night shower. He directed his voice to the cloud, “Could you *not*?”

The sky, of course, did not respond. Instead, it seemed to quicken in spite, shifting from a gentle sprinkle to a full rain.

“Damnit!” Nick smacked his Jeep Wrangler’s locked door in frustration. It seemed he was the only person in the parking lot of the Site, only a few hundred feet from the doors. Unfortunately for him, there wasn’t much shelter to be had near the door.

He jogged across the asphalt, lab coat up over his head to provide some little protection against the onslaught.

The light inside the entrance’s glass doors was almost taunting him. He fumbled in his pocket for his keyfob so he could get in-

Only to find it wasn’t there.

“What in the-”

He facepalmed himself.

I left it in the lab.

Right by my fucking car keys.

He smacked his face against the glass hopelessly.

It’s not like he could go back to the car, that was the whole reason he was going back to the Site in the first place.

He pounded on the door. “Anybody in there?!”

Nothing.

Well, could he blame them? Most of the Site didn’t stay there until 1am because they fell asleep at their desk-

“Hello?” He shouted again, knocking a few more times.

Silence.

Assistant Surgeon Dr Karl Jacobs, for whatever reason, was an insomniac. This had its perks and disadvantages. For instance, he could sometimes use it to his benefit by pulling all-nighters and accomplish more research than one could usually in two days. It was his most productive time, but it had consequences in the morning.

This was one of those nights.

Karl glanced at his watch.

1:12.

He stood from his table, stretching.

Couldn't hurt to take a walk around the Site, right? Get some blood flowing before he went back to work for another... six hours? Yeah. Six hours.

He put an earbud in and started the usual loop around the hallways. A right, a left, two more rights.

Thud thud thud.

Karl looked up from his phone, trying to source the noise.

Bang!

"HEY, YOU!" Someone shouted, making the poor sleep-deprived man jump.

He turned towards the front doors of the Site, which were twenty or thirty feet away at most. A guy with jet-black hair and a white headband was banging on the door, looking drenched and desperate.

"YEAH, YOU!" He yelled again, smiling this time. "LEMME IN!"

Karl quirked an eyebrow as he approached the stranger. He spoke just below a shout, so the man could hear him.

"Why?" Karl questioned, "Don't you have your fob?"

"NO!" He rooted a hand in his hair, "LEFT IT IN MY LAB."

"And how do I know that?" Karl smirked, "You could be trying to break in."

"WHAT THE-" The stranger calmed himself, "GO TO LAB 203. GRAB MY KEYS AND FOB, THEY'RE ON THE TABLE."

Karl laughed, "What about you? You're soaked."

The man rolled his eyes. "I'M ALREADY DRENCHED."

Karl started walking back down the hallway, waving over his shoulder as he headed to Lab 203.

Sure enough, there was a pair of keys and a scanner ID on the table by the door. Karl brought them back to the strange man at the front door.

“These yours?” He said through the glass.

“OF COURSE THEY ARE-” The guy sneered, “LET ME IN!”

Karl shrugged as he compared the ID to the person in front of him, “Alright.”

When Karl unlocked the door, the stranger stumbled inside. The man was a bit taller than Karl, by three or four inches. He really was rain-riddled from head to toe. After looking to the rain outside Karl could see why -- it was practically raining cats and dogs .

“Thanks,” The ravenette snatched his keys, “The name’s Nick Armstrong.”

Karl watched amusedly as Nick attempted to fluff the water out of his hair and struggled to get out of his lab coat; leaving him with a soaked-through black t-shirt.

“You’re just going to go back out again,” Karl laughed, “Why go to the effort?”

Nick leaned up against the cinderblock wall in defeat. “Don’t want to go back just yet... It’s dry in here...”

Karl chuckled as he extended his hand, “Karl Jacobs, assistant surgeon.”

“Fancy,” Nick replied as he shook it, “I’m just a research junkie.”

Karl shrugged, “Nothing wrong with that. Hey, if you’re going to stay here to dry off, want to help me with something?”

“Overtime work for no pay,” Nick grumbled, “Sounds like S- to the L- to the A- to the V- to me.”

Karl peered at him quizzically, “A Russian?”

“Wha-”

“Look, you can borrow one of my backup sweatshirts. I have a stash in case anything um, *unsavoury* gets on mine.” Karl smiled, leading Nick around the corner to his lab.

“Good idea,” Nick nodded in agreement. “Seems like a good exchange, a shirt for labour.”

Karl scoffed, “We’re here.”

He opened the door to his darkened lab, with only one of its available three stations set up.

Karl automatically drifted to a certain drawer, pulling out a light orange hoodie. He tossed it to Nick, who took it gratefully. Karl watched through his peripheral vision as Nick peeled the soaked t-shirt off himself, and quickly changed into the hoodie. It was a bit small for him, even though it had been oversized for Karl.

“Thanks,” Nick smiled. “Whatcha working on?”

“Just a little something for my friend,” Karl responded, “The one I assist.”

“Nice.” Nick hopped up onto the counter.

They managed to get a nice conversation going, talking about their jobs, lives, and everything in between. After an hour or so of miscellaneous work, Karl looked up curiously.

“You stayed this long?” He raised an eyebrow.

Nick shrugged, “Nothing better to do. Plus, you’re fun to talk with.”

“Thanks,” Karl laughed softly. “But shouldn’t you get some sleep? It’s like, 3 am.”

“Nah,” Nick shook his head, “Rather be here.”

This, of course, would come back to haunt him. Especially because he ended up falling asleep with his head on crossed arms.

Karl grinned softly at the sleeping ravenette he’d only met mere hours ago. He gently lifted the hoodie from around Nick’s shoulders and settled it over his head, so that it blocked more light for him.

The dark blond turned back to his work, wanting to get a little more done before the night was out.

??? Log: P rr- DeV ie Fina l t E st.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

===== ???

"I'm so sorry, nerd."

Clay's words are soft and gentle, not betraying the ardent agony in his voice as his mind is ripped apart at the seams.

"I'm so, *so* sorry-"

"CLAY! NO! DON'T DO IT-"

George's frantic voice pools in Clay's ears. It's comforting to hear him alive and safe(ish) at least, but the guilt that crashes down is almost worse than the mental torture his own baby sister was causing.

He just *had* to be stronger.

For him.

For her.

For *everyone*.

"George I'm so sorry I'm so sorry-" Quiet sobs of apology leave the blond's mouth, unable to do much more than just sit there and *take it*.

"Weak."

Emily's voice fills her brother's soul like lava in a mold, casting him in her image.

"You're fucking weak, brother."

He looks up, slowly, painfully, ignoring the searing sting in his bruised eye. At least he could *look* this time around.

"Emily, they're in your head. Y-you don't know what you're doing-"

"I know exactly what I'm doing, Clay-!" Her tone switches ever so slightly to that of a child, impetuous and intent on playing with a favored toy.

Maybe they were all just toys to her.

"Listen nerd, I- I'll take you home, back to Mom and Papa, we'll-"

"I don't... I don't want your pity."

...Fuck.

She's too strong. Too much, her rage and hurt and pain and betrayal for the last years of her life crashing down onto the last of Clay's mental blocks as if they were nothing but paper, crushing the last shattered fragments of his psyche.

Emily Anderson has won.

Clay slumps, unconscious, blood leaking from his ears and eyes.

George drops to his knees.

"...Sorry, loser."

Message interc?pted.

Attempting to Decode.

....

===== ??Unk?wn?? T?me E r r o r- T?mel?ine ma?fun?ti?o????

Processing.

Rebooting.

Please wait, do not turn off your PC.

....

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"Guys, GUYS- we got an activity spike over here."

George Davidson looks up from his yellow notepad with a snort, the last few uh- *years'* worth of work grating on his sleep schedule. "Wait, seriously? It happened again?!"

"YEAH." A familiar and excitable face rounds the corner, golden-retriever like in its qualities. Fluffy golden hair frames a freckled face, eager green eyes peering curiously at his partner. "It's go-time, love."

Holy shit.

Holy *shit*.

George stands with a frenzied nod, tugging on his labcoat half-senselessly as he follows his loved one across corridors and through halls, beside bunkers and along various labs.

"Is it a big enough spike to power DeVries?" He asks, pulling his partner's sleeve to keep up.

The blond slows down enough for George to follow, a huge grin on his face. "Way big enough. This is *it*."

"So..."

"So, my waffle-loving husband, we *finally* just get to live our goddamn lives normally, after this works." Clay grins down at the shorter man, taking George's hand in his own. "Get in, save the day, and get out. Back to sipping cocktails on the beach."

"That..." George takes a moment to think.

"That sounds like *heaven*."

Chapter End Notes

;) hope you're enjoying Uncon revamp two: electric boogaloo

Chapter 65

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

===== *The Present.*

“Anthony?” Nick called out into the forest, “*Anthony!*”

Karl walked silently by him, a yard or two behind as they picked their way through the leaves. Everyone had split up a while ago, and it’s not like he could have said no.

“Where is he...” Nick muttered to himself, fiddling with the end of his headband.

“Hey,” Karl walked up behind him and put a hand on his shoulder. It made the poor ravenette jump out of his skin, but he composed himself.

Karl frowned and retracted his hand.

The taller man began to scan the immediate area for any kind of clue. Footprints? Not that he could find any. The ground was too dry for that anyway.

Thunder rolled in the distance.

“It might rain-” Karl sighed, “Are you going to be ok?”

Nick looked back at him, eyes slightly wild. “We’re going to find them- *him*, and get back before it starts.”

Karl hesitated, then nodded.

“Rain,” Nick laughed, “Just like the first time we met.”

“Mhm.”

“I had to let you in the Site, y’know. Rescue you from nature.” Nick grimaced, waiting for his answer.

“Yeah, that was a funny moment looking back.”

Shit.

Nick could have screamed in frustration. But instead, his eyes fell on something curious.

“Look,” Nick bent over to look at a disturbance in the leaves. It looked kind of like something had been *dragged through*, a path on the ground made from compacted leaves and broken branches.

It was faint, but it was there.

“This way,” Nick charged ahead.

“Wait, it’s going to rain!” Karl held out his hand, like something had fallen on it. “We need to turn back.”

“No.” Nick grunted. He continued onward, hunting for more disturbances in the undergrowth. He gritted his teeth as a singular drop of rain landed on his back, sizzling steam curling off his skin.

Can’t be long now, we’re getting to the edge of the property.

The trail was getting ever more subtle, ever more elusive.

Karl made an uncomfortable noise from behind him. “I really think-”

“Look!” Nick shouted, pointing into the distance. “Is that- is that a shed?”

“Nick, we need to go back!”

“No!”

Nick jogged a little faster as two, then three raindrops found his arms and shoulders; it stung like how being burned would feel to a normal person.

C’mon.

In under a minute he was at the structure, which indeed seemed to be a shed.

“Nick!” Karl yelled from behind, “That’s just the electrical shed! See, the fence runs out of it, that’s where I turned down the power earlier!”

Nick didn’t listen to the faux Karl, instead choosing to jostle the steel door. It didn’t budge.

Well, not yet anyway.

Nick focused all his will into his right hand, which began to glow with inner heat. He held it to the door’s handle, which melted to nothingness under his touch.

With the lock gone, he simply ripped the door off its hinges.

“Karl?!” Nick shouted into it, no longer caring if he gave his suspicions away.

Because there, on the floor of the electrical shed, was a trapdoor.

The floor was wooden -- *for heaven’s sake* -- so Nick painfully cooled his hands before prying open the paneling.

Light spilt into the pitch-black cellar, illuminating a dusty concrete room.

“N-nick?” A weak voice coughed from the depths.

A few more raindrops hit Nick’s exposed back.

“*Shit-*” He swore as his skin hissed, “Karl, I’m coming!”

The *other* Karl caught on.

“I wondered how long it would take you.” He laughed, rolling his eyes from behind. Nick straightened as he stood up, turning to look at the imposter. “You’re quite the dumb bunch, figured you’d get it sooner.”

“Who the *fuck* are you-” Nick spat but was cut off by the person in question shifting their form, changing to become slightly shorter and slightly slimmer.

The Karl appearance was gone. In its place was a well-groomed looking man, not seeming a day over twenty-one. He looked like he might have been wearing makeup.

The man did half-hearted jazz hands along with another eye-roll. “Hey, sisters. My name’s Agent C.” He sneered, walking up to Nick.

“Keep your shapeshifter ass away from my boyfriend,” Nick growled, wincing as yet more rain began to come down.

“Awh,” the shapeshifter pouted, “Rain hurts, doesn’t it?”

“Shut the fuck up.”

Clay, get your MINDREADER ASS OVER HERE RIGHT NOW.

Way ahead of you.

“Stop right there,” George’s voice called from a few hundred feet away. Nick turned to see him running through the ferns, with Clay struggling a bit more as he followed.

“Oh, you have *friends*?” Agent C laughed sadistically, “What are you going to do, sing kumbaya and shoot me with rainbows?”

George quickly reached where Nick and the Agent were, not even stopping to catch his breath. “I don’t know who you are, but you lost.”

Nick had never, not once in his life, been more grateful to see the short doctor and the (admittedly extremely clumsy) blond.

The rain started to pick up, eliciting a cry of pain and shock from Nick.

“Get inside,” Clay called from a ways away, “Get out of the rain!”

Nick nodded as he obliged, going down into the cellar of the shed.

The glow from his lava was enough to illuminate his surroundings in a dim orange luster.

And there, huddled up against the wall with Anthony in his cat-traited glory, was Karl.

His Karl.

Nick heard a shout from outside, then the sound of electricity and a loud thud.

“Oh my god-” Nick dropped to his knees as he approached them, “You’re alive-!”

Karl cracked a grin, throwing himself forward into Nick’s arms. Anthony leaned back up against the wall with a smile of relief. It seemed that the worst injury the boy had sustained was a nasty knock to the head, which didn’t even seem that bad.

Nick gathered his partner to him, finally able to hold him tight and never let go.

“I missed this...” the lava-boy murmured into Karl’s neck.

“So did I.” The dark blond replied with a content sigh.

More shouting from outside.

“GEORGE! GO AND TELL THE OTHERS WE FOUND HIM!”

Nick finally leaned back from the hug, looking over Karl’s injuries.

Five angry red lines arced across his skin, four on his torso and one on his face. The electrical burns were still open and bleeding, not yet scarred.

“Can you stand?” Nick asked, directing the question to both Anthony and the doctor.

Anthony nodded, rising from the ground to demonstrate his point.

“I don’t think I can...” Karl grimaced, “H-haven’t eaten in two days.”

Nick swore under his breath.

“Hey, Nick?” Clay’s voice called into the cellar.

“Yeah?”

“I need to say something real quick-”

Nick looked back at Karl, “I’ll be back in thirty seconds, ok?”

The blond nodded and swiftly pulled Nick against him to press a kiss to his lips, stained salty with dried tears.

Nick pulled away, “I love you.”

“Love you too, hothead.”

Nick smiled as he ran back up the half-flight of stairs.

“What do you need?” Nick questioned, “We really need to get everyone out of here.”

“That’s the thing...” Clay sighed, scratching at the base of his skull. “I’m going to tell you something, but you have to promise to not freak out.”

Nick felt the pit of his stomach drop. “What is it?”

“Do you promise?”

“Fine.”

“Well... I...” Clay winced as he spoke, “I’m- I’m blind, Nick.”

“*WHAT?*”

“You promised!” Clay shushed him.

“Pardon my volume, but *what the fuck.*”

Clay started to look really uncomfortable. “I have to tell you because, well, George went to go make sure the others got back, and now it’s up to the two of us to get Anthony, Karl, and *this* douche-clown to the farmhouse.”

Nick’s eyes were wide, in the middle of gesturing with his hands. “And you didn’t tell us this until *now*? *Does George know?*”

“Uh- no.”

“What?!”

“I don’t want to worry him...” Clay muttered, “We’re all stressed already. Plus, I do fine on my own.”

“*How the-*”

“I kinda use other people’s minds to see through their vision.”

“Wh-”

“You’re sounding a bit like a broken record,” Clay sighed.

“Sorry.” Nick replied, “I have so many questions -- but that can wait till later.”

Clay nodded. “Right now we just need to get home.”

Nick glanced past Clay’s shoulder. It was raining, *really* hard.

And for about the third time in five minutes, a string of unmentionable words ran through his brain.

“If you take care of the sleeping Agent Cunt *or whatever* and Anthony, I’ll take Karl.”

Clay quirked an eyebrow, “But I need someone to *see*, ”

“Anthony can do that,” Nick called as he ran back down the stairs.

He had the beginnings of a plan.

He just hoped he didn’t die in the process.

“Anthony,” Nick said calmly, “I’m gonna need you to go with Uncle Clay and stick with him. Ok?”

The catboy nodded with a small smile and dashed up the flight.

“As for *you*, ” Nick half-grinned as he gently scooped his partner into his arms. “I’m going to have to carry you.”

Karl let out another contented sigh, resting his head against Nick’s non-lava’d shoulder. “Thanks, Snapmap...”

Nick scoffed in playful annoyance. “Oh stop it, you.”

He kept that same pleasant expression plastered on his face in spite of knowing what was about to happen.

“Clay,” Nick instructed, “Go on ahead. I’ll be right behind you.”

Clay looked worriedly out in the rain as he slung the unconscious Agent over his shoulder. “But-”

“*Go.* ”

Clay took note of his tone and did as told.

Once he was barely out of sight, Nick held Karl a little tighter in his arms as he stepped out into the downpour.

“*ARGH-*” He shouted in agony, feeling every drop of water needle into his skin with stinging sparks.

It was almost a sensory overload as he struggled to stay upright, let alone walk.

Bad idea.

But he had to do this.

For Anthony.

For the nearly-unconscious man in his arms.

He took one step, biting down on his lip to keep from crying out again. Tears welled in his eyes, only adding to the onslaught of misery as they traced hellish paths down his cheeks.

Nick took another step.

Then another.

He kept going, despite feeling the full force of nature's wrath against him. One minute of suffering became two. That became five.

And seven minutes of torment later, Nick miraculously arrived at the door of the farmhouse.

"Guys-!" Nick's voice was raspy. Was that blood he tasted?

The door opened to a concerned Sylvee.

"Nick!" She exclaimed, Niki appeared right behind her. "Oh my god- are you ok?"

Nick didn't really know just how awful he looked. His back and arms were a mess of places where rain had hit, angry and red. His entire torso looked like one solid second-degree burn.

"H-hey..."

The two women managed to get Karl from him and down on a couch inside; turning back around just in time to see the lava-boy collapse on their front porch.

Chapter End Notes

teehee!

also i am sprinting full-force back into my httyd phase and i think i have some hot takes lmk if you'd be idk. interested as readers to see my httyd drabbles

Chapter 66

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

===== *A few hours later.*

There was darkness. Or at least, a lack of light.

“...Nick?”

There, a voice! Nick’s groggy brain started to wake.

“Nick!”

He cracked his eyes open, sleepy lamplight leaking in. His whole body stung like the worst sunburn of his life, but somehow worse. Nick woke like ketchup falling from a bottle; which was to say slowly, then all at once.

“Where am I-” the lava-boy sputtered as he shot straight up. Upon seeing he was secure in the living room of the farmhouse, he sighed in relief. Various occupants of the house were scattered around the living room, reading or talking quietly or watching CNN on the TV. “H-how long was I...”

“Four or five hours,” Clay responded, walking swiftly over.

“Oh god,” Nick murmured hoarsely. “Where’s Karl?”

“Right here,” came a familiar voice. Karl was sitting on a different couch, looking worse for wear but generally alright.

Nick sat up a little more, swinging his legs around so that he wasn’t taking up the whole sofa. “Are you ok? Did I get you home safe-”

In response, Karl stood shakily, gently making his way over to sit by Nick. He sat down, nestling against the lava-boy’s side. The burn-like injuries on Nick’s skin lit up with pain, but it was enough to bear if it meant he could be close to his partner. Curiously, the burn on Karl’s face seemed to have already healed, leaving only a pale scar by his jawline. However, the lines of injury along his torso were still bleeding and bandaged.

Clay grinned softly from nearby. “Welcome to the Kentucky Fried gang, Nick.”

Nick chuckled as he put an arm around Karl. “No kidding.”

Schlatt stood idly and gazed out of a window, watching the rain come down. Schlatt hadn’t really been a problem since he woke, only staying silent, no signs of malice towards anyone. He looked at peace, almost. Quackity was helping Techno in the kitchen with something, and the two of them somehow managed to *not* make an absolute mess of it.

Wilbur started to pick at a guitar he found in one of the farmhouse's many closets, gentle music wafting around the room. He and Niki sat on the floor, cross legged. Niki hummed along, like the tune was familiar to her. Fundy and Eret sat on the third of the three couches, listening intently to Wilbur.

Tubbo, Tommy, Anthony, and Charlie (that corn demon SCP) were playing some sort of game in the loft, their soft giggles further enriching the atmosphere. Sylvee was watching over them from a beanbag chair in the corner of the loft, looking up from her book occasionally.

"I should have come home sooner," Nick sighed, resting his head against the top of Karl's.

"Mmm..." Karl hummed. "Don't you leave me again. Ok?"

Nick pressed a kiss to his forehead. "Promise."

George emerged from one of the bedrooms, already wearing pajamas. Reasonable, since it was already six in the evening. And especially since winter was closing in, the nights started to creep in sooner.

Quackity poked his head out from the kitchen. "I'm assuming everyone likes pizza?"

General grumbles of agreement resonated through the house.

As if on cue, Sylvee descended from upstairs. She snatched a reheated cheese pizza and promptly returned to her beanbag perch.

Clay wandered over to George, bumping his shin against a coffee table on his way. Biting his tongue, he continued onward. George was leaning against the wall next to one of the sofas, holding a paper plate with two slices of pizza on it.

"Hey, Georgie-"

George's face lit up. "H-hi!"

Clay sat down on the arm of the sofa. "If the rain lets up, do you feel like taking a walk later?"

George raised an eyebrow as he munched. "I mean, sure. Is there a reason?"

"I just wanna spend some time with the man I love."

George blushed a deep rose.

"I- love you too, Clay."

The blond smiled -- but had to bite down on his lip to keep from tearing up. Everyone else was nowhere near, not even looking in their direction.

Clay didn't get to see George's face when he told Clay that he loved him.

“Are you alright?” George looked at him, concern flashing across his face.

“Y-yeah,” He stuttered. “One moment-”

Clay dashed off to the bathroom, accidentally ramming his shoulder into the doorway before closing the door tightly behind him.

He muffled a sob, frantically trying to wipe tears from his eyes. His dead, useless eyes.

Clay desperately held his hands over his face, concentrating with all his might.

Just like how he’d placed his hand on Karl’s burn, healing it almost completely. He tried on the other four, but almost passed out from exhaustion.

“*Heal*, goddamnit!” he hissed under his breath, pressing against his eyes as hard as he dared.

He felt the familiar tingling in his fingers. It had been there with Skeppy, back at the Insurgency too. A little flower of hope bloomed in his chest.

Did that mean-

He waited a few moments before opening his eyes expectantly-

Inky blackness.

“*No!*” he cried, almost forgetting to quiet his voice. “This can’t be it, I can’t be *stuck* like this-”

Knock knock.

“Clay, are you alright in there? I heard a shout-”

It was George’s voice.

“I’m fine, Gogy!” Clay called in as cheery of a tone as he could muster. “Just uh... got an eyelash in my eye!”

“Ok...”

Clay listened as George’s footsteps faded down the hall.

Clay sank to the chilly tiles, back against the door. He remained there for another five minutes, pressing his fingers against his eyelids again and again, trying to restore his vision - to no avail.

"Please..." he whispered weakly for no one to hear. His hands trailed to the edge of the sink as he steadied his trembling hands. "I... I just want to see him again."

But of course, nothing miraculous happened. No answered pleas.

He sniffed, collecting himself. He couldn't stay here for much longer; George would start getting suspicious. He didn't even *know* if he looked like he'd been crying.

C'mon, Clay.

Pull yourself together.

He found the doorknob with minimal difficulty, managing to lock onto Wilbur's vision when the Brit looked up to see Clay's exit. The familiar millisecond calculation of coordinating with *someone else's* eyes fell back into place as he navigated his way back to his earlier seat.

"You ok?" George questioned, sitting down beside Clay.

Instead of responding, Clay pulled him into a hug.

And outside, the rain started to give way to another breathtaking starry night as clouds dissipated into nothingness. Nothing but the chirps of nocturnal birds, nestled somewhere within the shadows, and the gentle notes from Will's guitar could be heard as the last peals of storm gave way unto a hard-earned calm.

Chapter End Notes

i feed off of affirmations if u like the book lmk lmao-

Chapter 67

===== *A few hours later.*

“Where are we going?” George giggled, holding onto Clay’s arm as they strolled through the darkening woods, the sun starting to dip below the horizon.

“Nowhere in particular,” was the carefree response.

“Ok...”

They started walking parallel to the stream that wound around the property, quietly listening to the gurgle of the water, the chorus of evening crickets, and the calming sound of footfalls on the undergrowth. George shivered slightly in the suddenly brisk autumn air.

Clay looked around through George’s eyes, trying to see what he thought of the forest surrounding them.

George fell silent for a few moments, musing on how aesthetically gorgeous the dusk-lit fall foliage was, albeit a little dull from his own visual condition.

“Here.” Clay halted abruptly, accidentally yanking on George and causing him to topple into the blond -- who tumbled to the ground like a bowling pin.

“Oof-” Clay landed flat on his back, George plummeting onto his stomach.

“Ow...” George grumbled, not bothering to stir from his place.

“At least you didn’t land on the ground,” Clay muttered. “Could you-”

George shifted, sitting up. It was pleasant, despite the earlier rainfall -- the calming scent of petrichor still hung in the air. Clay sat up, running a hand through his now slightly-damp blond hair.

Currently, George was gazing over Clay’s shoulder and into the sunset. Through George’s eyes, it looked a lot dimmer than Clay remembered it to be, the brilliant oranges and purples of his memory faded to brown and yellow.

“H-hey,” Clay started, reaching out a hand. It came to rest on George’s cheek, Clay’s thumb tracing the shorter boy’s cheekbone.

George scooted a little closer, holding onto Clay’s wrist with one hand.

“Was this what you wanted to come out here for?” George laughed softly.

Clay smiled, leaning in a little. “Privacy, I guess.”

“Mhm.” George sighed, pressing his lips against the palm of Clay’s hand.

I can't even see him-

Clay brought his other hand to caress George's face. He opened his mouth to say something, but couldn't quite find the right wording.

Despite not being able to read minds, George seemed to understand perfectly. The brunet came forward a little more until he could rest his forehead against the blond's.

"C-can I kiss you-" Clay whispered, heart beating out of his chest.

Instead of responding verbally, George pulled him by the collar and pressed his lips against the mind-reader's.

Clay's apprehensions melted as he connected with the brunet in his arms, fitting together like puzzle pieces. Clay tilted his head, burying one of his hands in George's hair.

Do it now-

Clay brought the other hand from where it had been on the shorter boy's waist to his cheek, lightly brushing the brunet's closed eyelid with his thumb.

The familiar tingling sensation started in his fingertips.

Please work...

If I can't give my own sight back, at least let me help him.

With a final desperate press against George's lips, Clay broke the kiss.

George's eyes flickered open-

And saw a world of color that he'd never seen before.

"So?" Clay grinned idiotically, fully aware of the result. "Did it work?"

"Oh." George was speechless, all the world falling away except for Clay's eyes. They were- well, he'd always seen them as dull yellow, but now they were *green*.

Startlingly emerald green.

George only now noticed the subtle ginger tinges to the blond of Clay's hair, only now realized just what a blush looked like. Before, pink had just been brown.

So now, seeing his partner green-eyed and rosy-faced...

It was a little overwhelming.

"I-"

For the first time in quite a few moments George broke his gaze from Clay's eyes, instead to notice the sunset that spewed fiery colors into the heavens.

Clay smiled as he imagined the look of pure awe on his partner's face, so evident in his voice. He was glad, he really was.

But he had also come out to the forest for another thing.

"George," Clay's face faltered a bit as George looked back to him. "There's something I need to tell you-"

"Thank you."

Clay couldn't exactly *see* it, but from George's voice, he sounded on the brink of tears. Quickly Clay brought his thumb up to wipe them away, then gathered him up in a hug.

"I just..." George stuttered. His tears began to blot on Clay's shirt. "I didn't expect you to... I didn't think I'd ever- *thank you thank you-*"

George balled his fists into the blond's t-shirt before looking back up at him with a bittersweet smile.

"George I *need* to tell-"

"T-this might sound insane," he laughed weakly, "but for some reason, this is the happiest I've been in... a long time."

Clay's grin faltered once more for a moment before he hastily replaced it.

"A-and I feel like this is a sign, I guess." George cleared his throat, "Being able to see color again, it makes me think that... that maybe everything can be ok."

Clay could have kicked himself.

Shit.

He's happy.

I- I can't tell him I'm blind, not when he's finally ok!

I can't...

"...Clay?"

George's expectant voice snapped him back to the present.

"Yes-" Clay eased a smile back to his face. "I'm here."

"I just thought maybe we could go back to the farmhouse?" George murmured excitedly, the last of the sunset's flame fading to indigo as the night crept across the sky.

"Good idea," Clay agreed with a nod, standing and brushing off his jeans. He extended a hand to George, who took it gratefully.

As the two returned to the house, the brunet was in an enthusiastic daze of finding random things to stare at, drinking in their newfound colors -- one subject in particular a resplendent bush of wild lilacs.

Lilacs.

Clay would have to remember that.

Upon their return, George rushed into the house excitedly, yelling and stirring up disquiet as he announced the fact that yes, he could see color!

Clay brushed his hand along the doorframe, a quiet satisfaction settling somewhere deep in his chest as he realized that the farmhouse was beginning to feel like home.

Several people had clustered around to congratulate the short doctor, leaving Clay to partake in his own kind of observation from the doorway.

What Clay did *not* expect was for Karl to run up and hug the shapeshifter, whispering a message in his ear.

“Nick told me everything.”

Karl released the blond, tears starting to brim in his eyes.

“I’m so, *so* sorry.”

Clay’s eyes started to heat up as he held together a watery smile. He’d have to *talk* with Nick later, but he was glad that another person knew.

“I’m assuming you didn’t tell him,” Karl sighed.

“He just- he was so happy, I couldn’t ruin it-” Clay muttered frustratedly, balling his fists.

Karl patted him on the back reassuringly. “There’ll be other days.”

Clay nodded, sniffing back the last of his tears.

He barely kept his composure for the rest of that evening, trying his best not to dwell too much on it.

Because deep in his mind, he knew.

That he’d never see George with his own eyes again.

Chapter 68

===== *Three hours after*

I'm waking up.

There's- there's something on my mouth-

I can't open my eyes...

What? It's gone?

I wake up all at once, sitting up so fast I get a headrush.

Where am I?

In some sort of... operating theater? There's people on all sides, one of them is holding an- IS THAT AN IV?

And then it all comes rushing back, the sight of the medical equipment and this... particular room...

The Insurgency.

"TERMINATE HIM!" Some woman shrieks, and people go scurrying on all sides. "WITHER HIM!"

No.

I see something in the right side of my vision-

And grab it by the throat.

It lets out a scream of agony- and only then I realize that my hand is... glowing? It's burning. So is the rest of me.

Wait, this isn't an 'it'.

'It's' a 'he'.

And I'm choking him to death with a hand of lava.

I have to let go-!

Must. Take. Revenge.

Tried- to wither- must-

NO!

What the hell is wrong with me?

WHY CAN'T I LET GO?

I watch as the skin underneath my hand burns away, searing down to the muscles of their throat.

Good.

I don't let go.

He tried to kill me. Only fair.

Blood boils beneath my touch, sizzling alongside their throat.

They look into my eyes.

Terror-filled eyes.

Too late for them.

The light fades from their expression, their form slumps.

I finally let go.

Wh-

What the fuck did I just do?

I stare at my hands, one of them covered with charred blood-

“What am I?”

I have to get up-

BANG!

“Argh-”

Something's...

Did something just SHOOT ME?

I- I'm not bleeding. I'm alive...?

They'll regret that.

My body repels the bullet somehow, pushing it outwards till it just... pops out.

I grin sadistically.

“See, now you’ve gone and made me mad.”

Let’s see just what I can do now.

I look up to where the rifle pokes out from the ceiling, inhaling.

WHOOSH!

A jet of flame spews from my mouth, striking the rifle and burning it and whatever was near to the ground. The ceiling tile begins to bubble and melt.

Someone shouts something about “subduing”.

The reply must have been negative, because the remaining people in the room flee.

Like scared lemmings, all jumping off a cliff.

I turn towards the door, already readying another breath.

Wait, no.

This is wrong.

This isn’t how it went-

I let out my fire again- aiming just above the door. It collapses downwards, trapping people inside.

No running now.

But I never-

I get off the hospital bed.

One doctor looks me in the eye, starting to beg for his life.

Oh, how foolish they were.

I plant a palm onto his face and smile as his shrieks of anguish faded after only a few moments.

When he falls, his face is unrecognizable, all his flesh burnt to a smoldering black, down to the skull.

STOP! THIS NEVER HAPPENED, I WOULD NEVER-

Another doctor falls as I burn a hole through her stomach.

I stick the next one’s hand in the lava on my shoulder before snapping his neck.

The last one looks a little younger.

Should he really be in the Insurgency?

He chose this.

He deserves the consequences.

NO- I CAN'T WATCH, *THIS ISN'T ME-!*

I smile and start to walk away. He breathes in a shaky sigh of relief before turning to find his way out of the room. Before he can get too far, I breathe a stream of blistering flame into the back of his skull.

He falls, just like the rest.

They'll all fall someday.

I HAVE TO STOP- THIS ISN'T REAL, THIS ISN'T REAL-

"Nick?"

I look to where the voices are.

There's two people left, one tall blond and the other a short brunet.

"Nick, you just killed all those people-" Clay stares in horror, "W-why would you do that?"

"How could you?"

Looks like he, too, made his choice.

"I did, didn't I?" I look at the destruction left in my wake.

"D-do you remember us?" Clay whispers, his voice laden with fear.

I scoff.

"Hell yeah I do, blob-ass bitch."

He smiles in relief -- a reaction executed a bit too early.

I walk towards him, grinning.

"Hey, Nick, what-"

In one motion I take him by the throat and slam him against a wall. He gasps for a ir, The acrid smell of burning flesh already pervades all my senses, his smoke a miniscule twist as it joins the atmosphere .

"S-STOP IT!" George yells, trying to pry me off him.

His fingers phase right through me.

“N-nick?”

I smirk and press harder, squeezing the life from his lungs.

The terror in his eyes is so real, so vivid.

THIS CAN'T BE REAL, IT CAN'T!

Why is everything so... real?

Why can I picture murdering my own friends so clearly?

Did this happen?

Am I losing my mind?

No, this can't be-

His eyes flicker, their glow fading in and out.

“You MONSTER!” George screams, trying to strike me but failing miserably.

I turn to look at him, Clay's lifeless body slipping from my fingertips.

“Maybe I am.”

“NO-!” Nick yelled as he bolted upright, a sense of sheer terror in his heart and blood pounding in his ears.

It was the third night in a row that these nightmares had tormented him, each one ending more gruesomely than the last.

He knew they weren't real.

Right?

“W-wha's going on...” Karl mumbled in his sleep, rolling over to face Nick. His eyes slowly cracked open, widening in alarm when he saw the state his partner was in.

“Are you ok?” The dark blond whispered urgently, sitting up and resting a hand on Nick's shoulder.

He didn't respond, instead staring off into nothingness. Nick took labored breaths, still trying to calm down.

He'd seen the one scientist's death in vivid detail too many times, but this..?

Whatever was happening, it was getting worse.

“Nick?!” Karl jostled Nick’s shoulder, his voice rising in alarm.

Nick’s stare snapped to the blond’s, the manic intensity behind his eyes causing Karl to involuntarily lean back. Though, it only lasted a fraction of a second, for Nick broke the intensity when he saw the expression... the *fear*... on his boyfriend’s face.

“I- I’m sorry-” Nick mumbled as he dragged his hands down his face in frustration.

Pale moonlight lit the room in greyscale, de-saturating everything but the glow from Nick’s magma.

Karl took in a shaky breath. “What happened?”

“J-just a nightmare.” Nick smiled weakly, leaning over to kiss Karl on the cheek. “Don’t worry about it.”

When the ravenette laid back down, Karl noticed the shadows under his eyes.

“Nick, look at me.”

Karl put a gentle hand under Nick’s chin, trying to discern something from his expression.

“Have you been sleeping?” Karl asked, his eyebrows furrowing as he predicted the answer.

“Y-yeah, I really-”

“Nick.”

“...ok.” Nick sighed in defeat, intertwining his fingers with Karl’s. “I... the nightmares, they’ve been keeping me up. I didn’t want to worry you-”

“Worry me?” Karl scoffed, “Nick, that’s my *job*. I’m *supposed* to worry about you, that’s how this works. Remember?”

“Y-yeah...” Nick gave a delicate smile, willing the tears brimming in his eyes to not spill over. “I should have told you.”

“Damn right,” Karl laughed softly, taking his thumb and wiping away Nick’s unshed tears before they had a chance to burn paths down his cheeks. “No secrets, alright?”

“Karl... I- I’m scared.”

The blond, instead of responding, tightly embraced Nick.

“God, I’m so lucky to have you.” The ravenette mumbled quietly, returning the embrace. Thankfully, most things in the house, including Karl’s shirt, were fireproof.

“And I’m glad you’re finally back home,” Karl sighed contentedly, “Right where you belong.”

Nick leaned back from the hug, smiling genuinely this time.

“So...” Karl started after a moment of silence, “Do you want to tell me what you saw?”

“Uh-” Nick’s face fell, “Do I have to?”

“Well, I can’t help if I don’t know what happened.”

“...Alright.” Nick murmured. “I- I was back at the Insurgency, when I first woke up with my powers. Do I even call them powers? Mutations? Anomalous-”

“I’d stick with powers,” Karl winked, “Sounds better.”

“Mmm-” Nick responded, “But I... I re-lived it again.”

“Oh.” Karl frowned, “That’s... awful.”

“But every time, worse and worse things keep happening, I start *killing more people*, this time I even-”

Nick paused. He almost couldn’t say it.

“What happened?”

“I watched myself kill Clay.”

Karl drew in a breath.

Did I say too much?

Does he think-

Does he know I’m a monster?

“No wonder you’re scared.” Karl said after an agonizing moment of silence, “I... I would be too.”

Nick looked into his partner’s eyes, trying to see if there was anything there but affection.

There was none.

“It feels so *real*, Karl-” Nick whispered, “Like- like it actually happened. Like I’d do it again-”

Karl shook his head, interrupting. “No, you wouldn’t.”

“How do you know? How do *I* know?”

“Because you’re *Dr. Nick Armstrong* , the man who got caught in the rain, the one who pulled all-nighters with me for no purpose then to just be *near* me, the same SapNap who helped me smuggle SCPs out of the Foundation. I *know you* , Nick.”

A fraction of a smile tugged at Nick’s lips.

“And you’re one of the most amazing, caring, and loving people I’ve ever met.” Karl finished, taking Nick’s hands in his own.

“And *I* know,” Nick chuckled, “That you’re Dr. Karl Jacobs, the one who rescued me from the rain, the one who I fell in love with over the span of two weeks, the man who has been *the* greatest highlight of my life.”

Karl blushed, “T-thanks, Nick.”

“And I *know*, ” he continued, “That I love you with all my heart.”

The blond grinned, “Love you too.”

“After this is all over...” Nick sighed, his heart starting to pound for a totally different reason, “Do you think we should... I dunno... settle down?”

Karl’s eyes widened imperceptibly. “Wh-what does that mean?”

“It *means*, ” Nick traced his partner’s cheekbone, “That I never want to leave your side again.”

“Wh-” Karl stuttered, “A-are you-”

“Karl Jacobs, will you marry me?”

Chapter 69

===== *The Morning. 6 AM.*

“GUYS!” Karl dashed out of his room at the crack of dawn, banging on the upstairs bedroom doors before crashing downstairs.

“Wh-” Techno cracked an eye open at the commotion. “I was havin’ a good sleep...”

“Wake up!” Karl shouted, continuing on to knock on George, Clay, Eret, and Fundy’s door.

Clay appeared almost immediately, picking up on the pure joy that was radiating from Karl. George was not long behind, holding onto Clay’s arm like a crutch.

“What’s going on?” George yawned, shifting to wrap his arms around Clay’s stomach and bury his head in the blond’s upper back.

Farmhouse occupants started emerging from their bedrooms in various degrees of drowsiness.

Darryl stumbled down to the living room. “What’s going on?”

Nick finally emerged from his room, looking both tired and rested at the same time. There were dark circles under his eyes, but his expression was totally at peace. He passed Sylvee on the way down the stairs, standing next to Karl.

“Are you gonna say it or should I?”

Tommy and Tubbo emerged alongside Wilbur and Niki, curious.

Karl leaned over and kissed Nick’s cheek.

“We’re uh-”

Nick interrupted, “We’re enga ged-!”

The entire farmhouse erupted into chatter.

“*WHAT?!*”

“When did that happen?”

“So happy for you guys!”

Karl smiled warmly, “...yeah.”

As Anthony and Charlie rushed up to hug their foster fathers, Clay's attention was drawn towards the front door. He didn't see or hear anything odd, of course. The alarm was directed much farther.

He was starting to develop a radar-like-sense.

But instead of detecting ships, the little dots were *minds*.

And there were a ton headed toward the house.

"Guys?" Clay muttered, tapping George on the shoulder.

The conversation went on around him, everyone still chatting about the upcoming union.

"*Guys!*" Clay shouted, raising his voice.

Everyone hushed, turning to look at the blond.

"I- I think-"

Then he heard a helicopter's blades droning in the background.

"We have company." Karl muttered as all of the color drained from his face. He ran outside with Nick in tow, only to find the exact opposite of what they wanted to see.

Two black vans were speeding down the dirt path, with a helicopter trailing behind them.

"What in the-" Fundy followed them outside, "How did they find us?"

Clay turned, a hand on George's shoulder. He could sense where Eret's mind was, and directed his gaze there.

He was feeling extremely and undeniably guilty.

"Foundation?" Karl shouted over the growing noise. "Or Insurgency?"

Eret started to speak, "I think it's the In-"

Just then, the chopper grew too near for his words to be heard.

The occupants of the farmhouse couldn't do anything but *watch* as the helicopter found a landing spot a few hundred feet in front of the house.

Charlie poked his head out of the door.

"Stay inside," Nick urged him back in, shutting the front door behind him.

Once landed, the chopper slowed to a halt. A man in a black suit hopped out of the pilot's seat, starting to walk towards the house.

Sparks flew from George's fingertips.

“Hold your fire. Clay took hold of George’s wrist. “They haven’t done anything yet.”

Two more agents followed the pilot out of the helicopter, one looking strangely familiar.

The vans finally caught up, pulling into the driveway and screeching to a halt. Masked agents armed with automatic rifles poured out, quickly surrounding the farmhouse.

“They think bullets will work on me?” Nick growled, his lava spiking to a blistering yellow.

Karl put a hand on his arm, holding him back.

The pilot approached them through the surrounding wall of soldiers, staying a good fifteen feet away.

“Greetings.” The man said, his voice tinted with a British accent.

“What do you want?” Karl spoke up, stepping to the front of the group.

The circle of agents tightened as it closed in on the farmhouse.

“My name is Director Philza.” The pilot announced, “And I’m here to take you back to the Foundation.”

“No-!” Clay stepped forward, “You don’t understand,”

“Your containment will be re-established,” Phil pointed a finger at George. “The Councilman says *that* one did quite the number on him.”

George’s expression changed from fear to anger in a millisecond.

“You’re telling me he’s not *dead*?” George questioned, pure malice in his voice.

“Look, listen,” Clay sighed, “We know what he told you, he’s *lying*-”

Dozens of clicks sounded as safety triggers were released.

“He’s part of the O5 Council.” Phil raised an eyebrow. “Don’t try and lie your way out of this. We *are* re-establishing your containment.”

“How about...” Nick tapped a finger on his chin, “*No.*”

He burst into action, tackling the nearest guard, and was shot over twenty times.

Twenty-one bullets then popped out of his body like candy from a PEZ.

Nick stood, dropping the unconscious gunman. Karl noticed that there weren’t any burn marks, and realized that Nick was trying his hardest not to seriously injure anyone.

George ran forwards, phasing out of corporeality. The agents were completely (and foolishly) focused on Nick and George, who had already shocked three guards into unconsciousness.

Then something drew Philza's attention again -- the platinum blond had seen someone familiar among the farmhouse guests.

"Ah, Agent B, how good to see you again."

The message had been directed at *someone*, but who no one really knew.

Strangely, Wilbur seemed to have an adverse reaction to his speech, flinching and guiding Niki closer to him.

The fighting seemed to halt for a moment as Phil walked forward, the agents too scared to accidentally hit him.

"Agent B, report."

No response.

Phil was looking straight into the eyes of one individual.

One pink-haired, blue-eyed individual.

Techno.

"Agent B, I said, *report*."

Techno finally met his gaze, just now registering that he was being spoken to.

"Who's Agent B?" Techno asked, raising an eyebrow.

Phil's smile faltered, but he continued.

"Stop that. Now, *report*."

"My guy, I literally have no idea what you're asking me to do." Techno shrugged. "Maybe try someone else? I think you have the wrong person--"

"That *damn* memory loss--" Phil clenched his fists. "Agents, st--"

Taking advantage of the distraction, George dropped another four, five, then *six* agents.

Phil pinched the bridge of his nose. "Look, just come with us. You can't run forever, and it's easier to get information out of a living person."

No response from the farmhouse.

"How did you find us?" Eret spoke up.

Phil snapped his fingers, and one of the agents handed him a tablet. There was a pulsating dot on the screen, labeled 534.

“Simple, really.” Phil sighed, “Tapped into the chip on ol’ glowy eyes over here, and tracked it.”

George turned to face Clay, eyes wide.

“C-clay, do you-”

The blond’s hand clapped to the base of his skull, trying to somehow feel if there was one of the insidious chips planted there.

“Oh yeah, he’s been chipped the whole time.” Phil shrugged.

Strangely, Eret looked relieved.

“Wilbur, why don’t you tell them?” Phil smiled, turning his gaze to the brunet. “Tell them why they should stop running.”

Will froze, his grip tightening on Niki’s arm.

“Wh- what-”

“Tell them why you haven’t recognized TEC820, TO334, or TV880 yet.” Phil grinned. “I’m sure they’re curious, seeing as you were online “friends” for months.”

Niki looked up at him and gently removed his hand from her arm. “Wilbur, what is he talking about?”

“Niki, I-”

“Tell them about how I recruited you to... *watch over* them.”

Wilbur’s face blanched and he backed up slightly, seeing the looks of outrage from his friends -- people he considered family.

“Y-you have to understand, I didn’t have a choice-”

“We *all* have choices, Will.” Sylvee fumed.

“You don’t know what happened-” Will pleaded, trying to earn a shred of sympathy, “I was told that they’d be killed if I didn’t look after them.”

“*What?*” Niki turned her anger to Phil, walking towards him. “You’d *kill* two innocent *children?*”

“One of whom hacked into the Foundation’s website,” Phil responded.

“That’s not a reason to take a kid’s *life!*” Fundy objected.

“Wasn’t my decision.” Phil sighed. “If it were up to me, they’d be considered too much of a security threat, and *dealt with* in the full meaning of the phrase. It was the Councilman, actually, who suggested putting them into some new experimental program.”

“DeVries.” Clay whispered. “You *knew*.”

Phil frowned, “About what?”

“You’re one of *them*, aren’t you.” Clay muttered, his voice eerily calm. “Insurgency. Just like Scott.”

Phil’s gaze hardened. “I see we’re back to propaganda.”

“No,” Clay continued, “He and Er-- he took me against my will. Turned me into a hybrid, called me an SCP, and wiped my memories. I narrowly escaped the Insurgency with my *life*, just to run straight into the belly of the beast.”

Phil listened, his brow furrowed.

“He killed me.” Clay whispered, the environment around him oddly quiet. As if *waiting* for something. “He used halogen lights, and he *killed* me.”

Phil replied, “You’re suggesting that an O5 council is *Insurgency*, that’s-”

“I’m *blind*, because of him.” Clay’s voice broke on the word, looking to where he could sense Phil’s mind was. “H-he took *everything* away from me.”

George snapped his gaze to Clay in alarm, wide-eyed.

“You think I’m lying?” Clay’s voice quivered with anger, “Because of *Scott Major*,”

“ I can’t fucking *see the man I love*.”

Chapter 70

===== *The Morning. 6 AM.*

Phil's vision seemed to ripple, almost like a pulse to a heartbeat. Like he was looking through the surface of water that had been disturbed.

His head felt like it was wading through thick fog, not able to go anywhere, to do nothing, to see nothing. He numbly felt his right hand rise, open, close, then fall.

The signal to stand down.

But why would he do that? Phil was thoroughly confused.

It was like he had vision, but saw naught.

And then that vision faded to black.

When he shook off the mental cobwebs, he found himself in a corridor, mostly deserted. It looked like a standard Foundation issue, white and tiled.

A familiar blond doctor walked blythely past him, a lab coat slung over his shoulder.

"Anderson!" Phil started after him, but the doctor didn't even flinch.

"He -- or I -- can't hear you." A voice said behind Phil. He whirled around to see another version of Clay, this time wearing what he had been only moments before his vision had started to act strangely.

"Where am I?" Phil demanded.

Clay, the one who could hear him, started walking after the past version.

"This is a memory." Present-Clay said, *"It's the best evidence I have."*

Phil followed, his curiosity getting the best of him.

"When are we?" the Brit asked.

"Oh, about... four, five months ago?" Clay shrugged, *"When I went missing."*

Phil raised an eyebrow. *"What exactly happened?"*

"Watch and see."

"Hey Eret," Past-Clay smiled at a new man, one which Phil recognized immediately. "Did they pull you for testing too?"

“Spoiler alert; they didn’t.” Clay sighed. *“C’mom, we have to keep up.”*

“In here,” Past-Eret led Past-Clay through a door.

Phil followed, wanting to know what came next.

Present-Clay rounded the corner just in time to see his past self fall at the hands of Techno, a needle in Clay’s neck.

The memory faded to black, the world crumbling around them.

When it was done, Phil and the doctor were left alone in a black void.

“Take me back.” Phil spat, walking up to the doctor to try and grab him by the collar. Phil’s fingers passed right through.

“Not yet.” Clay smirked.

“I’m not going to accept that one little memory! Something having to do with Eret being a traitor has nothing to do with Scott, an O5 councilman!”

“Oh, but it does.”

The world started to form around them, a new memory emerging.

“Where are we this time?” Phil grumbled.

The scene changed to an office, all too familiar to Clay.

The office of Scott Major.

“Watch.” Clay said, gesturing as the memory filled in the councilman himself. He was engrossed in a file. *“I had just left, but if you look closely...”*

Phil glanced to their left, and there was Clay, with his face pressed up against the small window by the office door.

Fortunately, Scott was too engaged with the file to notice.

Phil watched as the blue-haired councilman opened a safe, and sat the files inside. Scott then tapped his earbud;

“Major to Purpled. I’m going to need you to make a delivery.”

Scott waited a few moments.

“May vengeance reign.”

The Councilman took his finger away from the earbud, ending the transmission.

“That- that was-”

Clay nodded sadly, *“That was an Insurgency sign off.”*

Phil looked at Clay, confused.

“No, you’re faking this. You have to be.”

Clay shrugged, *“Not even I can just- fabricate false memories.”*

Phil looked a little guilty when he said that, but shrugged it off.

They returned to the void.

“Now will you take me back?” Phil sighed, almost sounding defeated. *“I’ve seen your ‘evidence’, and I don’t think it’s real.”*

Clay grinned, *“You think I’m just going to let you out, and have you shoot my friends? What do you take me for?”*

“A madman.” Phil grumbled.

Clay raised an eyebrow. *“An altogether accurate conclusion.”*

A new memory started to fade in, this one a lot... darker.

“This isn’t even my memory,” Clay frowned, *“It’s George’s.”*

“How?” Phil questioned.

“I’m going through his mind right now as well,” Clay winced, as if straining a bit. *“Not as easy as one might think.”*

It was Phil’s turn to smirk. *“You can’t keep me forever, can you?”*

Clay furrowed his eyebrows for a moment, before smiling pleasantly.

“I don’t have to. George and Nick have taken care of the squadron problem.” The blond doctor said, watching Phil’s face go pale.

The memory took full effect, showing them a dark hallway of dusky black metal. It was red-lit. Clay saw George hurry past, and jogged to keep up.

“C’mon!” Clay urged Phil onwards as they ran up a flight of stairs.

George rounded the corner to another hallway, this time with a door at the end.

“Where even is this?” Phil asked, pausing to catch his breath.

“Site O5 Major.” Clay muttered as they followed George through the door.

George burst in silently, going invisible.

Clay winced as he saw himself on one of the security cameras, unwitting and naïve.

"Oh, Clay, I'm so *very* sorry the Foundation has to lose you..." Scott said, and Clay looked to Phil for any sort of reaction. Phil's face was flickering between disbelief, anger, confusion, and the stony preset he kept.

They watched the rest of the event play out, up until the flash of Helios lit up the room. Clay grimaced, subconsciously putting a hand up to touch his eyes.

"What is this?!" Phil said, just as Scott had turned on the audio feed. *"This can't be real, you're faking this-"*

"How could I?" Clay retorted, tears starting to brim. *"What reason do I have to lie?"*

That was something that Phil couldn't really come up with an answer for.

George shocked the Councilman, then dashed outside.

The memory crumbled back to the black void.

"When will you believe me?" Clay yelled, *"That man sent the Foundation, the federal government, the whole damn country after us! What could we possibly have done?"*

"I don't know!" Phil threw his hands in the air, *"Leaked state secrets or something!"*

Clay seemed to collect himself. *"Let me prove it to you without using memories."*

"How?"

Clay thought for a moment before answering.

"Have you ever met Big Hack?"

Chapter 71

===== *Morning.*

Phil came crashing back to his senses, staggering backwards.

The squadron lay unconscious around him in a semicircle, displaying slight singes or electrical burns.

George materialized beside the blond, placing a gentle hand on Clay's arm. His mind materialized as well on Clay's radar-like sense.

Clay didn't even start to use George's vision, it felt like a violation.

He remembered a time before all of this; before he went missing, before he even started investigating the volunteer program. He remembered when he and George had binged the entirety of *Avatar: The Last Airbender* together over the course of a week in the summer, when assignments were scarce. Was it strange to say he felt a bit like Toph? Clay remembered how she used her earthbending to see her surroundings better than any non-blind person -- maybe he could use his abilities as effectively.

We'll talk later.

George? I-

Later.

Clay nodded imperceptibly.

"Phil-" Clay started, talking to the disoriented director. "Will you let us prove ourselves?"

Phil scowled at him. "Not like I have a choice."

"Right about that," Nick replied, grinning.

Niki walked up to Clay, her kind nature unmistakable in his mind.

"How do we do this?" She asked, "Did you show him the memories?"

"Yeah." Clay affirmed, "But we still need more proof. Like, emails or something."

Wilbur looked up, eager to redeem himself. "Tubbo! He's like, scary good with computers."

Tommy glared at Wilbur and Philza, stuttering in his speech. "*W-was.*"

Wilbur deflated.

“I already thought of that,” Clay started to pace as Nick kept an eagle eye on Phil. “I don’t know if I can pull it off, but earlier I was able to take memories from George, and show them to Phil inside my own head.”

Sylvee shook her head. “That’s like, three levels of mind reading I wasn’t prepared for.”

Clay shrugged, “Maybe if I could force some of Tommy’s recovered memories into Tubbo, that would work?”

Eret walked over to Tubbo calmly. The bee-boy didn’t recoil, instead, he smiled.

“H-hi!”

Eret gave a tiny smile, and examined the hybrid before turning back to Clay.

“He was wiped with the first prototype of the Obliviscateur, it’s a lot weaker than the one that was used on George.” Eret announced, “A good key memory should be enough to fracture it’s effects.”

“Good,” Clay sighed, “Because that’s our best shot.”

“N-not thr-throwing away our sh-shot.” Tommy said determinedly, holding onto Tubbo’s arm.

Wilbur glanced at the plant SCP in alarm, “Was that a *Hamilton* reference?”

Tommy just stared at him, confused.

“Techno, would you like to bring Phil inside?” Karl grinned, “I’m sure he’ll be right at home with our other guest.”

Phil sighed exasperatedly. “Agent C. You caught him, didn’t you?”

“Agent Cunt is knocked out in the basement.” Nick smiled, “Don’t worry, we finished it, carpet and everything. It’s actually really nice.”

Phil looked at him incredulously. “Pardon, but nothing you just said made sense.”

Nick shrugged, “Not much I say does.”

Techno grabbed Phil by the shoulders and guided him inside, where he tied Phil’s hands with medical gauze and sat him down on a couch.

“Techno, my man, are you alright with keeping watch on this one?” Clay asked.

“He won’t know a moment’s privacy, sleep is for the weak.” Techno agreed, making his point with an *“I have my eyes on you”* gesture.

Phil rolled his eyes.

“Tubbo?” Niki beckoned him over to another sofa in the living room, smiling as he sat beside her. Tommy plopped down with him, refusing to leave his side.

Clay knelt on the floor in front of them, holding a hand out. Tubbo seemed nervous at first, but eventually took Clay’s hand.

“I’m going to do something,” Clay spoke softly, “I’m going to take some of Tommy’s memories, and show them to Tubbo. Are you two ok with me going inside your heads?”

Tommy nodded vigorously and encouraged Tubbo to do the same. After a moment, he did.

“Alright.” Clay sighed, starting to link their consciousnesses to his own.

Five seconds later, the two SCP boys were out like a light, and the process had begun.

Chapter 72

===== *Afternoon.*

Tubbo's eyes fluttered open as the memory ended, and he saw four very concerned expressions hovering in front of his face.

And then he saw Tommy.

"*Tommy!*" He gasped happily, not hesitating a bit to hug the boy tighter than he ever had.

"*H-hey Tubbo.*" Tommy mumbled, burying his face in the bee-boy's shoulder.

"Are you ok?" Wilbur cut in, "How much do you remember-"

Tubbo smiled up at him, "*E-enough.*"

Niki broke into a grin beside Will, and threw her arms around Tubbo.

"*H-hi, Niki!*" Tubbo giggled.

"He can talk." Fundy was beaming wildly, his ears perking up, "He can talk!"

Eret was standing awkwardly to the side, hands in his pockets. His expression was a blend of guilt and self-loathing, reluctant to come any closer.

Tubbo stood on uneasy feet, clinging to Fundy's arm for support.

To everyone's surprise, he walked over to Eret, showing no hesitation.

"Wh-"

Without thinking twice, the bee-boy enveloped Eret in a tight hug. The taller was rendered speechless, freezing for a minute before returning the gesture.

"*If-forgive you.*"

Eret's eyes widened.

He hadn't thought anyone could trust him, not when he didn't even trust himself.

"T-thank you, Tubbo."

The brunet smiled before returning to the couch, holding onto Tommy's arm. He seemed to be in a better state than before, even if-

Thud.

"What-"

“Clay!” George shouted.

In exhaustion, Clay had collapsed.

“What happened?” Sylvee rushed over, and with Karl’s help, lifted him to another sofa.

“No idea-” George faltered, “He just fainted!”

“He’s still weak from Helios,” Sylvee glared at Phil, who stepped back instinctually, even though he was halfway across the room. “Did you know about *that*?”

Phil shook his head, “I never heard of it.”

Sylvee narrowed her eyes. “If you’re lying, this house has so many blunt edges-”

Zak put a hand on her arm, “Let’s not murder the only source of information we have yet.”

“*Yet.*” She seethed.

Phil cleared his throat, “So about this proof-”

Nick’s gaze snapped to the Director in an instant, “One of our friends just *blacked out*, it can wait a goddamn minute.”

“Aight.” Phil smiled nervously.

Karl looked back at George, “You and Clay have a really strong mental connection, right?”

George frowned, “Yeah. More than I thought we did, apparently.”

Nick patted the shorter doctor on the back, “He wanted to tell you, he really did. You seemed so happy, he just couldn’t-”

“Yeah- you’re right.” George sighed deeply. “Karl, what are you thinking?”

“Maybe all that mental *talking* you did goes both ways,” The dark blond crossed his arms. “Like, what if you could connect to his brain somehow?”

George sat down by Clay’s head anxiously, putting a hand on each of his temples.

“He did this back when he did the first few memory transfers.” George explained, “Maybe it’ll help?”

Karl merely shrugged. “Wouldn’t hurt to try.”

Clay?

George grimaced as he concentrated, focusing completely on Clay.

Clay, are you here?

Hello?!

...Nothing.

George let out the breath he'd been holding, opening his eyes in defeat.

“He’s no-”

Georgie?

H-how are you talking to me-?

“What?” Nick asked, “He’s what?”

George’s eyes widened and then closed again, “He’s here!”

I have no idea!

What happened? Are you ok?

I uh-

Pushed myself a little too far?

I think?

You’re literally passed out on the couch.

I’m on the couch?

Nice. Could have sworn I fell on the floor.

Are you joking with me right now?

Of all times?

Oh- right. Sorry.

I’m still curious, though.

About what?

How the hell are you doing telepathy?

Karl said I might be able to, because of our ‘connection’ or whatever.

“Is he ok?” Nick demanded nervously.

“He’s fine,” George sighed, keeping his eyes shut. “Overworked himself.”

“Ah.”

It would make sense, especially...

Especially what?

Well, I've kinda been using you to see.

HUH?

Mhm. I figured out I could do a ratchet version of mind reading, and see what the other person sees.

H-how long?

Since Helios.

Yet another reason for me to forcibly commit fork-in-outlet to Scott.

Pfft, George-

How long are you going to be like... this?

Honestly? No clue.

It's never happened before, but not more than a few hours.

Hours?!

God.

I- please try and hurry.

What? Did something happen?

No. I just... I just miss you already.

...simp.

What?!

What's a simp-

Clay seemed to chuckle in his mind,

Don't worry about it.

C-can I maybe rest now?

O-oh! Sorry.

Do you like, need to be left alone?

I think so?

I've never been this tired before.

George frowned.

That's not good.

Rest up, Karl and I have everything under control.

Good, I have complete faith in you.

...love you.

Love you too, simp.

G'night.

George heard Clay sigh contentedly before his voice drifted off into the void.

"He's just deep-sleeping." George grumbled to Nick.

"Well *that's* perfect timing," The lava lamp gestured frustratedly.

"*C-can I help?*" Tubbo walked over happily, hugging George around the shoulders.

Tommy was right behind him, elated at his friend's ability to speak. "*B-big Hack can help!*"

Tubbo chirped excitedly.

"Wait," Eret piped up from the corner of the room, "Did you say Big Hack?"

Tommy nodded, but his gaze held a fragment of malice toward the doctor.

"Tubbo once wormed his way into the Insurgency's database." Eret continued, "Who's to say he can't do it again?"

Karl seemed to want to debate it, but then raised his eyebrows in interest.

"Could work."

"So?" Eret looked to the bee-boy. "Is it the return of Big Hack?"

Supplementary Log: Change

===== *The Past.*

Maybe waking up wasn't such a good thing.

Tommy gritted his teeth, trying to keep from screaming as white-hot *something* ran through his veins. He couldn't even open his eyes; his entire body tensing in agony.

"Wh- what are yo-you doing t-to me?!" Tommy spat out, tasting blood in his mouth.

"Improving you." A deep voice droned, slowly growing closer.

Tommy wrenched an eye open, catching sight of a room with black metal walls.

A few IVs hooked up to his arms.

A man in a lab coat to his left.

Dirty bastard.

"Wh-where's Toby?" The blond grimaced, moving his wrists. Unsurprisingly, they were restrained.

"Your hacker friend?" The doctor laughed mirthlessly. *"Three doors down the hallway, to your left."*

Tommy yanked at his restraints again. He seemed to be in some sort of dentist's chair, but made of cold metal.

"That'll get you nowhere." The doctor sighed in a weary voice. *"Better to just give in, no?"*

Tommy screwed up enough courage to open his eyes fully.

That man, he'd seen him before-

Eret. The bastard man who'd taken Toby and him.

"W-why?" Tommy questioned, "Why d-did you take us?"

"It's unimportant now." Eret smiled.

Something about that smile was more intimidating than the coldest of glares.

Eret brought out a hypodermic needle, with a face of cold professionalism being the only expression shown as he snapped off the safety cap and pressed it into a vein in the inside of Tommy's elbow. The blond's heartbeat quickened as he felt the needle draw blood from his arm, powerless to stop it.

Just Pog through the pain, Tommy.

Pog through the pain, you'll be fine-

After a few seconds, the blood-filled syringe was taken from his arm.

"This'll do nicely." Eret walked around the chair, fiddling with an IV of clear fluid. He turned a small node on the bag, and the substance began to drip down the thin tube. He deftly injected Tommy's blood into the bag, which bloomed a brilliant, phosphorescent red in reaction.

Poppy red. The one he'd seen every year on Remembrance Day in England -- in America it was called Veterans Day. Thousands of poppies decorated the streets then, and one year he'd visited the Tower of London to see its famous sea of flowers.

He quite liked poppies; even kept a few in his room. They were comforting, for some reason.

Tommy cried out as the glistening liquid entered his veins, more than *doubling* the burning he'd felt before. He clenched his fists, nails digging raw craters into his palms.

"It'll all be over in an hour." Eret said as he turned to walk out the door.

Tommy was pressed flush against the back of the chair, muscles involuntarily spasming in pain.

"Toby!"

=====

Darkness.

That was all he could see.

Flashes of images played in his mind-

Falling to the ground-

Something glowing yellow... a liquid?

Pain.

So much pain; pain that throbbed mercilessly in his veins, filling his mind and ears and body with a hazy rhythmic pounding.

The metal door scraped against the floor as it opened, startling the now bee-boy from his shattered memories.

Something- no, some *one* fell through with a dull *thud*, giving a small whimper of pain as they hit the floor.

The door ground shut behind them.

The person tried to sit upright, failing, and falling back to the floor.

“H-hello?” They called out.

Tubbo reached towards the voice, it felt... familiar.

“*T-tommy?*” He whispered instinctively, not sure what the word actually meant. He knew it was good, that it meant something safe, but couldn’t quite put his finger on what.

“Toby?!” Tommy gasped. He finally managed to prop himself upright, dragging himself over to the wall. “What did they do to you?”

Tubbo didn’t respond. He wanted to, he just didn’t know... how.

“Toby?”

No response.

Tommy’s hand found Tubbo’s shoulder, shaking him slightly.

“Toby, this isn’t funny anymore.” His tone was quick and panicked, unknowing of the other's situation.

Tubbo put his hand on Tommy’s arm.

The bee-boy heard a muffled noise, like a scream of frustration mixed with laughter. But it wasn’t laughter -- Tubbo really couldn’t figure out what was happening.

Tommy pulled his friend to him, hugging him desperately.

Tubbo didn’t recoil, but he also didn’t really know whether this was a good thing or not. He chose to return the embrace, numbly feeling Tommy’s tears on his shoulder.

“What did they do to you...”

A single, blood-red petal drifted to the ground.

Chapter 74

===== *A short time later.*

“Do you think you can do this?” Clay questioned Tubbo, gauging his level of confusion. The bee-boy was staring at a few laptops on the living room coffee table, seated cross-legged on the rug in front of it.

Tubbo nodded, looking to Phil.

“*L-login?*” He smiled pleasantly.

“I thought you could get in on your own.” Phil frowned.

“He also hadn’t been kidnapped, injected with serum, and had his memories erased,” Eret cut in, staring pointedly at the director.

Phil tried to come up with a response, but failed, swallowing his words. He walked around to where Tubbo sat, and hurriedly typed in his credentials.

Welcome, Director Phil Watson.

Tubbo drew in a shaky breath.

“You ok?” Clay asked gently, to which the bee-boy nodded. “How long will it take?”

“*A wh-while.*”

Clay sighed deeply. He patted Tubbo on the back comfortingly, and walked away.

Tommy sat down on the floor by his friend, his back up against the couch. He didn’t really *do* anything, but the mere proximity seemed to take some of the stress off Tubbo. Anthony appeared on Tubbo’s other side, engrossed in a book, but supportively present nonetheless.

Everyone gradually dispersed as the long wait started.

George grabbed Clay’s wrist and dragged him to their room, closing the door behind. Eret was just about to enter said room, but turned on his heels with a humorously concerned expression.

The poor blond doctor grew dizzy from disorientation, gratefully finding the mattress when he accidentally fell.

“We need to talk.” George sighed, sitting down on the edge of the bed.

Shitshitshit-

“Yeah...” Clay grinned sheepishly, “Uh-”

“It’s ok.”

“Huh?”

George smiled, “I *was* mad, y’know-”

“Oh-”

“Then Nick talked to me, and I understood.” George smiled, the serene warmth of his demeanor acting like aloe vera on burned skin. “I was finally ok.”

Clay’s hand reached out almost instinctively, intertwining it with George’s.

“Thank you.”

That was all he managed to get out before breaking into relieved sobs, shifting in his seat to face the man he loved.

George responded by tackling Clay into embrace, merely holding him as he finally cracked, as the fragile illusion he wove was at last allowed to unravel.

Tubbo clicked rapidly through the navigation header, inspecting each page. He opened up the elements and console, staring intently at the text that flew by as he scrolled. He stopped, before typing a little into the console and reading over the error message that popped up.

The bee-boy began to scroll away, but quickly returned. *“C-can I have a piece of paper?”*

Eret briskly stepped over to the lamp-table, rummaging through its drawer and producing a small writing pad and pencil; which he carefully set in front of Tubbo. He smiled up at Eret, who seemed to relax a little and gave an awkward smile in return.

Tubbo jotted down the deduced operating system of the Foundation's servers, handwriting a shaky scrawl, but still legible.

He spun around, opening a VPN on each of the laptops in turn, and changing the laptop's IP location. Returning to the initial laptop, he entered another couple lines of code and checked the elements tab yet again.

“C-cleaned?” He mumbled, frowning at the result.

He adjusted his previous code, adding a jumble of random letters, percent signs, and emojis. He hit enter, tilting his head as the loading circle spun and spun and spun, until finally, the site continued on without crashing.

The bee-boy nodded in satisfaction, opening the files database and continuing to open new tabs, their interfaces getting more and more archaic, until the saturated dark blue of the old Windows directory search came up.

He examined the site and jotted down a few more notes. "Anthony?"

He perked up at the sound of his name.

"G-get Clay?" Tubbo asked with a warm smile.

The cat-boy nodded and hurried over, fetching the blonde.

"What's the matter?" Clay asked as he knelt by Tubbo, glancing over the screens surrounding the bee-boy.

"File ty-type?" Tubbo pointed to the directory.

"Hm." Clay frowned and rapped his knuckles against his chin. "I... don't remember. You'll probably have to ask Phil." He noticed Tubbo's hesitation and quickly added, "I'll ask him."

Tubbo nodded his appreciation, and soon Phil stepped in. "Filetype?" He examined the screen. "Uh, .pdf and .log."

"T-thanks!" Tubbo smiled.

"I- uh, you're welcome."

Anthony watched curiously as Tubbo added some text to the end of the url and hit enter. A dark screen with an "Insufficient Clearance" message popped up, and Tubbo frowned, quickly adjusting his search and reloading. A file opened, and Tubbo gave a delighted few claps as it downloaded without a hitch.

He connected all the laptops with USB cords, and typed a line into his command terminal. Upon running it, the locations of every file he had newfound access to were displayed. He began grinning as he pulled up some documentation and swiftly typed up a short snippet of code, running it and watching as every file relating to DeVries was downloaded to the laptop.

Adjusting the code slightly, he ran it again and was able to retrieve the security camera feeds.

He looked over the downloads, checking to make sure they weren't broken, and giving a quiet cheer of triumph as they opened without problems.

"V-voila!" Tubbo smiled, spinning the laptop around to face Karl on the other side of the coffee table.

Clay tapped into Karl's sight quietly, sitting back to observe in his own way.

Tubbo looked on as the two others read over the files, with Phil joining behind Karl shortly after.

“Wh-” Phil’s eyes widened the farther he read. “This *is* Foundation documentation, right?”

“I’ve seen this before,” Zak frowned, joining the small group which had crowded around the screen. “Look, it ends at SCP-5349. That... that creature. The one that attacked me and...” His voice trailed off.

“Halo.” Darryl sighed. “You and Halo.”

His expression was unreadable- not seeming upset, yet not pleasant. Not cold, but also not warm.

Zak tried to speak, but found no words. He returned to looking at the files.

Tubbo’s eyes flashed as he noticed a stray link amidst the files, and he spun the laptop back around, fingers flying across the keys.

“T-there’s another l-layer,” He furrowed his brows, *“Of d-downloads.”*

He hit enter, and watched, satisfied, as yet another attachment opened successfully.

This time, all four observers drew in a sharp breath as they read the document -- especially Clay, who jumped right out of his seat.

“Wha-” The blonde started, “That’s-”

Karl looked up to the alarmed group surrounding him, looking to Nick in particular. “Feel like a road trip?”

Clay spun around to face George, “It was *right there-*”

“Clay, calm down-” the brunet rushed over to him, “What happened?”

“It’s in the Everglades,” Karl announced, “Whatever is at the source of DeVries, *everything* is pointing to this... Area 23.”

“I-” Clay stuttered, “I lived my entire life in Naples, Florida. It’s basically *in* the Everglades.”

“O-oh.” George frowned, “Wait, are we-”

“Yes.” Phil cut in, to everyone’s surprise. “According to this...” He motioned to the documents splayed across the screen, “This is *serious*.”

“Do you believe us now?” Karl asked, looking up from his seated position, twisting around to stare Phil dead in the eye.

The Director nodded shakily. “I hate it, but I do.”

Karl nodded, “Good.”

“So,” Clay spoke up, a bit shaken, “Who feels like a roadtrip to my hometown?”

Supplementary Log: Green.

===== *The Past.*

Tucking thick, shiny locks of golden hair behind her ear, Emily closed her locker with a satisfying click.

Finally, the day was over. Her backpack seemed heavier than usual, but then again, she'd had the weirdest headache all day. Emily had tried taking an Aspirin she got from the school nurse, but so far all it did was nothing. On top of that, it was *standardized testing season*. Any kid in high school knows the feeling, where teachers are going feral trying to get test scores up.

Understandably, she was stressed.

"Hey," A girl with light blue hair walked up to her with a warm smile, "You feeling any better?"

"I'm..." Emily shook her head slightly, "I'm fine. Thanks."

The girl patted her on the shoulder with a concerned look, but turned to walk away .

Emily started her journey home, weaving between exhausted teens. She pressed a finger to her temple, a rowdy group of boys making the pounding in her head worse.

What is this damn headache-

She stopped at the library, slipping a well-worn copy of *Mansfield Park* into the book return slot dropbox. By the time she reached the front doors of the school, most kids were already on busses or well on their way. She exited the building, turning left to the mostly empty lot around the back.

"Yo."

Goddamnit. Social interaction.

"What?" Emily tamped down the irritation in her tone, turning.

Two guys were behind her, holding a notebook.

Her notebook, and from the looks of it, her Calculus notes. She might have only been a freshman at the time, but she was already taking the class. But she was starting to fall behind a bit, and those notes were the only thing keeping her afloat-

Clay always told her she had the family gift of intelligence, and so far she'd proven her brother right.

Unfortunately, it had attracted some rather *unsavory* backlash.

“What do you *want*, Chad.” Emily droned, reaching her hand out.

The junior rolled his eyes in irritation, “Name’s not Chad.”

“Like I care,” Emily smirked, “You fit the stereotype. No brain.”

He ripped the first few pages out of the notebook.

“Hey!” Emily protested, the headache starting to intensify.

“Awh,” The Chad laughed, pulling a lighter out of his pocket. “Too bad.”

She grimaced, before dousing her frustration. She would handle this like she handled every other altercation.

Emily shrugged, “I sure hope burning my notebook helps you with your daddy issues.”

The Chad’s eye twitched as Emily grinned. He looked to his friend, “This bitch thinks she can talk to me like that.”

“A superiority complex too,” Emily’s words got ahead of her brain, “What’s next? Am I gonna have to start singing *Sweet Home Alabama*?”

“Fucking whore.” The Chad’s friend snarled, and Emily noticed with detached dread that several of his teeth were missing. He sauntered towards Emily, with a rather unpleasant expression on his face.

Again, Emily’s sardonic nature worked faster than her brain could tell her to stop. And for some reason, her mind latched onto a musical she’d seen a few days prior.

“You think I’m afraid of steroid-reliant future gas station workers?”

The Chad grabbed Emily’s arm and twisted it painfully behind her back, wrenching off her backpack and slamming it into the asphalt.

“Hey- alright fellas, let’s talk this out,” Emily laughed nervously, wincing as her arm twisted a bit too far in the wrong way. Pain flared in her mind, filling her vision with white-hot fire.

“Done talking.” The Chad’s friend grinned savagely, throwing his fist forward.

Emily braced herself for impact, her senses numb and useless with agony-

But it never connected.

“What the *fuck*- ”

She faintly heard The Chad yell in surprise, and her arm was freed.

What happened-

Emily cracked her eyes open to see something *impossible*.

Writhing in agony on the floor was The Chad's friend, curled in on himself.

And curiously enough, her headache was completely gone. The Chad was busy running away.

Emily unceremoniously poked The Chad's friend with her sneaker. He seemed to snap out of whatever had happened, relaxing.

But when he opened his eyes to see Emily standing over him, he made a less-than-manly squeak and curled into a ball again.

What-

"What's your deal?" Emily shouted, "I didn't do anything!"

He shakily reached out and grabbed the discarded notebook, shoving it up towards Emily.

"Take it-" He stammered, "Take it and *fucking leave me alone!*"

Emily was quite confused, but took it from him anyway. She sighed in relief - they hadn't damaged the really important stuff. She picked up her backpack and shrugged it on.

"Wh-" She started again, rethinking her words halfway through. "Are you ok?"

The guy started to sit up, seemingly so freaked out that he couldn't even look her in the eye. He nodded, almost imperceptibly.

"Aight." She shrugged, continuing down the way she had originally planned. Out of habit, she pulled out her phone camera, switching to the front camera.

She nearly dropped it when she saw her eyes were glowing a silvery white in the camera.

What the hell?

She watched in half-horror, half-fascination as the light faded, leaving her with her normal bottle-green irises.

What was that?

What did I just do?

Emily glanced back to the parking lot and saw that no one was there, silently grateful that whatever scum that had been was going to be alright.

What's happening to me?

Emily ran the rest of the way home, not stopping till the stereotypical white suburban front door was locked behind her.

"Clay?" She yelled into the house, sighing in relief when her brother emerged from the kitchen. "Clay, oh my god-"

His expression changed in an instant from loveable goofiness to concern as he rushed over. “Woah- what happened? Are you okay?”

“*I’m* fine,” Emily sighed, gratefully leaning into the hug her brother offered. “But-”

“But what?” Clay took her backpack from her and set it on a chair in the entryway.

Emily looked around, “Is mom here?”

Clay shook his head, “She and dad are at a PTA meeting.”

“Good.” Emily walked over to the sink for a glass of water. “I uh- can we keep something between us? You’re gonna be a doctor, and all-”

“Sure,” Clay raised an eyebrow as he pulled a barstool up to the kitchen island.

“You’re going to think I’m crazy-”

“Trust me,” Clay raised his voice a hair, and something in his speech told Emily he was being genuine, “Nothing you say could sound crazy to me.”

Emily nodded. “I think... I think I have powers or something.”

“...*What?*”

“I *knew* you’d think I’m crazy!”

“No,” Clay shook his head vehemently. “I don’t. But- how?”

“There were these boneheads, outside school.” Emily started to explain, “They had my Calculus notebook, were ripping pages out and stuff.”

Clay grimaced, “Ew, highschoolers.”

“Mhm. Well, I kinda went off on them,”

“*As you should-*”

“And they got physical...?” Emily cringed, waiting for his reaction.

“What?!” Clay stood, “Did they hurt you? What are their names and addresses-”

“Chill.” Emily gestured for him to sit back down, “I handled it.”

“*Oh?*” Clay frowned and returned to his seat. “Is this where you think the power thing comes in?”

“Yeah.” Emily refilled her glass, her throat was getting *painful*- “One of them threw a punch, but it never landed. Like, I looked up and one of them was on the ground, like I’d tased him or something.”

Clay hummed in interest, resting his chin in a hand. "Continue."

"Well, the first one saw something and ran. The second one just... sat there. Then he handed me the notebook, I made sure he was ok, and I left."

"What do you think happened?"

"Hell if I know!" She gestured frustratedly, "But I saw this-"

Emily brought out her phone, flicking through her camera roll. She luckily had gotten a photo of her eyes before they faded.

"Here." She pushed the phone towards him.

Clay looked at it, eyes wide.

"Do you believe-"

Her words were cut off by coughing, uncontrollable hacking that she couldn't stop.

"Hey- breathe-!" Clay reminded her, walking around the island.

She just couldn't stop *coughing*-

Until she coughed up blood in the sink.

"What the hell-" Clay leaned over the sink's edge, "What is *that*-"

The splatter of blood in the cold metal basin wasn't normal, it wasn't even red-

It was lime green.

Chapter 76

===== *The Present.*

“We can’t all go,” Karl wrapped an arm around Anthony, the short teenager smoothing down his bristling tail. “Someone has to watch the kids.”

The living room fireplace crackled and popped in the background as it fought off the November chill, casting a warm glow on the kids curled up beside it.

“W-we can take care of o-ourselves.” Anthony crossed his arms .

“I’m sure you can,” Karl sighed, “But who’ll watch Alex?”

“Hey.” The Mexican boy quipped from across the kitchen, “At least *I* didn’t get body-snatched.”

“Speaking of which,” Phil added, gesturing sheepishly with his bound wrists, “Can I ascertain the location of my field agent?”

“Agent Cunt?” Nick smirked, “Sure. He’s in the basement.”

“Agent wh-” Phil stuttered, his voice a mix of mild shock and confusion. “I won’t question it. Just- he can be helpful.”

“By impersonating my fiancé?” Nick grumbled, “How exactly was that *helpful*?”

Phil sighed heavily. “We thought you were terrorists.”

“You *know me!*” Wilbur spat, taking an aggressive step towards the Director. “You *knew* I wasn’t whoever that shitwad of a Councilman told you I was!”

“You weren’t who you told us you were, either.” Fundy added quietly, head bowed to stare at his shoes, as if to try and drown out the pointed words being thrown.

Will’s old white lab coat was draped over the brunet’s cast-wrapped arm, fist balled in the fabric. He turned to face Fundy, eyes wild.

“Fundy?” He spoke. A momentary silence passed between the two. “Wh-”

“Who are you, Wilbur?” Fundy lifted his head to meet Will’s eyes. “Which version of you is real?”

“I- remember L’manburg?” Wilbur grinned, treading apprehensively towards Fundy. “Researching Tubbo - how we used to get him around the Site. Tubbo in a box?”

Fundy remained silent, gaze dropping to the floorboards.

“Tubbox?” Wilbur tried again, running a hand through his hair, “Tubbo in a box? Remember?”

“*I- I remember,*” Tommy offered, reaching out towards Will from where he sat by the bee-boy.

“We need to go-” Clay urged, interrupting. “We’ll have to-”

“You *broke,*” Fundy cut in, voice trembling and ears twitching with rage, “the *Hippocratic Oath.*”

Eret gently put a hand on the fox’s shoulder, only for Fundy to shrug it off.

“Do no harm, Soot.” Fundy spat vehemently, striding towards Wilbur before speaking again. “*Do no fucking harm.*”

“But-”

“You’re no doctor.” The ginger snarled, “You think you’re worthy of this?”

With that, he swiped Wilbur’s lab coat from his arm, the sudden movement shooting sparks of pain through Will’s elbow.

“You’re no doctor!” Fundy laughed mirthlessly as he strode over to the fireplace. “You *betrayed us.*”

Eret stepped in, trying to calm Fundy down, “Floris, please-”

“At least you had an excuse,” Fundy looked towards Eret, “That damn chip. *He* doesn’t have a chip, and doesn’t have an easy way out.”

Wilbur’s eyes widened as Fundy brought his coat closer to the fire.

“Everything you did,” Fundy whispered, enraged, “was *voluntary.*”

He threw the coat in the flames, and watched it set alight, fire roaring up to meet its new tinder. As the white fabric blackened and crumbled, consumed by the blaze, the fire calmed to a wavering flicker.

“*Fundy!*” Eret grabbed his arm, “That’s enough.”

Wilbur laughed under his breath, “Thanks, Er-”

“Don’t you dare thank me.” Eret hissed, “I am not *defending* you.”

“O-oh.”

“Fighting amongst ourselves is exactly what they want us to do.” Eret sighed, rubbing his temples.

“He’s right,” Clay nodded, his voice grave. “We can sort out our differences once this whole ordeal is over and done with. But right now,”

“We need to get to Area-23.” Sylvee’s voice rang out as she emerged from the basement with a very disoriented Agent C.

He rolled his eyes, “Hey sisters.”

“Why does he-” Nick began.

“Don’t question it.” Phil chuckled dryly. “Anyway, we need an infiltration team.”

“People who can sneak by easily,” George nodded, “That means me and Clay, for sure.”

“Why Clay?” Niki frowned, “He can’t exactly shape-shift anymore.”

“Yeah,” Nick interjected, “But he can do this thing, where like, he can trick your brain into thinking he’s not there. It’s freaky.”

Clay simply shrugged and smiled.

“Ok, so me and Clay.” George nodded, “Who else?”

“*M-me.*” Tubbo spoke, his hand shooting up. “*T-tech support!*”

“And that means we’re taking Tommy with us as well,” Sylvee added.

“Wait, Sylvee, since when were you going?” George asked, “You don’t really have any... powers... or things...”

She smirked, “Hey Eret?”

“Yes?” He walked over.

“Who do you fear more, me or George?”

Eret thought for a moment. “The back of my head is still sore, y’know.”

“My vote’s for her,” Techno droned from across the room. “Y’never know when you’ll need a good bonking.”

Sylvee turned to grin at George, who simply put his hands up in defeat.

“Agent C and I will go.” Phil offered, “I might not be able to go in with you, but I can help Tubbo with security stuff.”

“Fine,” Sylvee muttered, “But I’m keeping an eye on you.”

Agent C rolled his eyes, but didn’t say anything.

“You’re gonna need to pack.” Karl looked up towards Clay, “You’re infiltrating a whole ass Insurgency *Area*, you’ve gotta go prepared.”

George glanced at his watch, which already read four o’clock in the evening. “Does anyone happen to know how long it takes to get to Naples?”

Tubbo typed something into Google, then spoke up. “*A-about thirty hours.*”

George sighed in irritation. “We need to get going. If we don’t take *any* breaks, we can get there by eleven in the morning.”

“Time Zone difference,” Sylvee pointed out. “So the earliest is noon.”

“Great.” Phil rolled his eyes, “We’re driving for a solid thirty hours. Tommy and Tubbo are underage amnesiacs, Clay’s straight-up blind, so that leaves me, Agent C, Sylvee, and George.”

Sylvee nodded. “We can take turns driving, three hours at a time. That sound good?”

“Mhm.” George responded, “Let’s leave at five.”

“Wait, already?” Nick interrupted, slightly panicked. “You’re leaving *now* ?”

Karl stood, and took his hand. “They have to.”

The lava-boy sighed deeply. “I know.”

An hour later, and the trunk of one of the black vans was crowded with suitcases. Sylvee, Tommy, and Tubbo had already piled into the third and rearmost row of seats, with Phil and Agent C climbing in.

As Clay pulled open the door to the passenger seat, Nick caught him by the arm.

“Hey, dude.” He frowned.

“Hey.” Clay responded, turning to face him. “Need something?”

“Just...” Nick suddenly pulled the mind reader into a brief embrace, “Stay safe.”

“I promise. ”

Chapter 77

Chapter Notes

It's official! I'm now doing art and writing commissions on Patreon!

<https://www.patreon.com/JayWrites23>

Super cheap, im not trying to make a living here, I just want something on the side for my community.

(And yes, there's a Discord if you subscribe.)

IVE GOTTEN A LOT BETTER AT ART SINCE Y'ALL LAST SAW IT LOLLLLLL
ANYWAY THANK UUUUU

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

===== *The Present, Six Hours Later.*

10.

After pulling over at the side of the highway near Lincoln, Nebraska, Sylvee hopped out of the driver's seat to switch with George.

"Six hours down, twenty-four to go." She sighed as she squeezed into the back seat.

"George, this reminds me of that time you stayed up a hundred hours straight." Clay laughed from the passenger's seat. "When that contagion SCP got out, a few years back. SCP-C0712, I think."

George smiled, "You were there, too. But you were at the riots while I was in the hospital."

Clay shrugged, "It was a good cause."

The brunet rolled his eyes and returned to the highway, which was mostly deserted. The occasional 18-wheeler sped past them in the opposite direction, a flock or two of birds soaring about off in the distance, but other than that, it was empty.

Unfortunately, it reminded Clay a little too well of when they escaped Site 05_Major.

Maybe he should sleep, rest up.

There were big days ahead.

“Darryl, I can’t sleep.” Zak whispered in the pitch-dark.

“...well, I *was* sleeping...” Came the hushed reply.

“So-” Zak sat up. “I’m bored. Let’s go stargazing or something.”

Darryl huffed. “Could you just let me get my damn sleep?”

Zak was taken aback, did Darryl just *curse*?

“O-oh. Sorry.”

It’s morning, and the farmhouse is quiet.

I’m-

I’m not in the Insurgency Site.

Finally.

Location doesn’t matter.

I guess it’s just... morning.

I walk to the hall, and out to the living room.

Clay isn’t here, neither is George-

Oh wait.

Florida.

“Hey, hot stuff.” Comes a voice from behind, and I wheel around to see Karl behind me.

“You should stop referring to yourself in the third person,” I respond.

He rolls his eyes and puts his arms around my waist. “You flirt.”

“You started this, not me.” I laugh.

Thank god this dream problem’s getting better.

It is?

No, it has to be.

This isn’t violent.

I'm just... dreaming about my finacé.

How can I be sure?

I can just...

Chill.

Everything's alright.

I press my lips to Karl's forehead, savoring the moment.

How does this feel so right and yet so wrong? What am I doing to mess this up-

So many things.

How could I have more fun?

Something is wrong.

Something is seriously wrong.

This shouldn't be happening.

I shouldn't be happy?

No-

I just don't want to hurt anyone, I've done enough harm.

And I won't. It's just a dream.

I don't want to dream about this.

Too bad.

"Nick, is everything okay?" He asks me, pulling back and starting to walk to the kitchen. I follow.

He fills a glass with water, asking me something. I can't hear it, the words numb and unintelligible.

Before I know it, my hand shoots out, wrapping around his throat. A dull thud rings out as his head slams into the wall.

The glass shatters.

"Wh-" His words come out choked, strangled.

I don't even know why I'm doing this-

I just am.

It's just a dream.

I'll wake up soon. I have to.

This is just a dream...

right?

"Nick- stop!" He begs, gasping for breath.

At this point, words mean nothing.

I lift him off his feet, dragging him up the wall.

This is just a dream, I'll wake up soon-

I have to wake up soon.

Chapter End Notes

It's official! I'm now doing art and writing commissions on Patreon!

<https://www.patreon.com/JayWrites23>

Super cheap, im not trying to make a living here, I just want something on the side for my community.

(And yes, there's a Discord if you subscribe.)

IVE GOTTEN A LOT BETTER AT ART SINCE Y'ALL LAST SAW IT LOLLLLLL
ANYWAY THANK UUUUU

Chapter Summary

9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

===== *The Present.*

9.

“Wake up, sleepyheads.” Sylvee smiled as she gently nudged Tommy and Tubbo awake. “We’re here.”

“God,” Clay sighed from the passenger seat, “It’s been forever since I’ve actually visited.”

The humid Florida heat seeped into the van, sticking Clay’s light blue dress shirt to his back. Even in early November, it was a bit over 80° Fahrenheit, or 28° Celcius.

“...Aren’t you kind of not allowed to?” Sylvee pointed out, “Foundation doesn’t really like that stuff.”

“I told them I was joining Doctors Without Borders.” Clay explained, “It’s an organization of medical experts who go overseas to fight humanitarian crises. I told them that I’ve been off in Afghanistan this whole time.”

“No offense,” George smirked as he parked the van, “But wouldn’t you be a little tanner?”

Clay rolled his eyes, “Maybe you’re right. Can’t exactly do anything about it, though.”

“Can’t you just shapeshift it or something?” Phil asked from the middle row.

Clay frowned, “S’pose it’s worth a try.”

It had been... how long? Days seemed to blur together. Regardless, it had been a hot minute since he’d shapeshifted. Maybe he’d forgotten how.

Closing his eyes, he focused on his appearance, willing his skin to turn a dusky tan, rather than his current pallor. After all, staying cooped up in a Site for years did absolutely *nothing* for the complexion.

“Is it working..?”

“I uh-” George stammered, “I’d say so-”

Clay got a bit confused, had he done something wrong? Why was George’s mind all giggly-

“So you can shapeshift again?” Sylvee asked, “That’ll be a huge help.”

The blond tried to manifest the white claws he used to have, to no avail.

“Apparently not,” Clay gestured with his obviously non-clawed hand in demonstration.

Hey Georgie, could you look a bit to the left-

Oh- sorry.

No worries. Love you.

The blond sighed as George’s vision scanned the row of houses on their left, and Clay’s focus immediately fixed on one house in particular.

505 Pine Grove Lane. Clay’s childhood home.

Were his parents even still there?

“Let’s head out.” Clay muttered, voice distant.

George nodded. “Everyone else, stay here. I’ll go with Clay.”

There were various nods of agreement, and the two stepped out of the van, and Clay managed to not trip and fall on the concrete as the two made their way up the driveway.

You okay?

Clay frowned.

Yeah, I’m fine.

I just... haven’t seen them in a while.

George sighed, linking his arm with the blond’s.

It’ll be alright.

I’m here with you.

I know.

Thanks, Gogy.

George scoffed quietly, finally eliciting a chuckle from the man beside him.

All too soon, the doors of his home were right in front of Clay.

George reached over and pressed the doorbell, and somewhere inside the house, a faint jingle chimed. A few moments of nothing passed. Clay turned to the brunet by his side, "Do you think they're even?"

"Clay?"

He turned to see the front door opening, a middle-aged man emerging from behind it.

"Dad?" Clay grinned, rushing forward to wrap the slightly-shorter man in a hug.

"Oh my days," He whispered, "It's you-"

Clay stepped back, and George flashed him a comforting grin. Not that Clay could see it, but he could sense the warmth behind the gesture.

"Linda! Come here!" The man called into the house.

"Coming, Micheal!"

Clay smiled wider, "Mom?"

"Is that Clay?" Linda hurried around the corner, seeing her son standing in the doorway. "Get in here!"

The blond doctor grinned sheepishly as he and George stepped into the house, the faint but familiar scent of sandalwood candles filling his nose.

"Y-you're back," Clay's mother ushered them farther into the house, "It's been so long."

"More than a year I've been on assignment," Clay sighed. "But I'm back."

"...no?" His dad muttered. "We haven't seen you since last June, but..."

Clay's voice dropped dangerously low, apprehension rolling off him in waves. "But what?"

"Weren't you in Yemen for a few years before that?" Clay's mother asked, "We didn't see you then either."

What?!

George, I shouldn't have been gone for more than a year-

The brunet shifted uneasily.

I'm sure there's a logical explanation.

"Y-yeah," Clay lied, "I was."

Why do they think I was in Yemen?

I never told them that-

“Our son,” Michael patted Clay on the back, “Doing so much good in the world. We couldn’t be prouder.”

“Hey, uh,” Clay started, “There’s a reason I’m here.”

“What’s that?” Linda walked distractedly to the living room, beckoning them to sit.

“Well uh-” Clay paused, just remembering that he hadn’t really thought of a plausible reason to be in Florida.

I got this.

“I work for the World Wildlife Foundation.” George quickly cut in, “Dr. Anderson and I met in Afghanistan, and I happened to have an assignment in the Everglades.”

“Mhm.” Clay joined in. “And uh, Mom-”

Oh god, here we go.

Huh?

“This is George,” Clay smiled nervously, “My uh-”

His dad grinned knowingly. “Linda, you owe me ten.”

“What?!” She sighed, “Clay, couldn’t you have told us *tomorrow?*”

“You were betting on-”

Michael cackled mirthfully as she pulled a ten dollar bill from her purse.

George looked to Clay, then to his parents, and burst out laughing.

“What’s so funny?” The blond asked indignantly, “You guys were *betting* on-”

“Clay,” George spoke between giggles, “You gotta understand, I’m not even *out* to my parents, and here yours are, taking bets on whether or not you’re gonna bring home a man, I-”

The brunette descended into peals of laughter once more.

“Mom I really need to talk to you-” Clay tried not to crack a smile, “Can we crash here?”

“Oh sure!” Linda grinned, “Just no uh, *funny business.*”

“Mom!”

George smirked.

‘Funny business?’

Oh, shush.

“So uh, we have a few friends as well,” Clay muttered, “Is it ok if all of us crash? We can find a hotel-”

“I won’t hear of it,” Clay’s mom responded, “You and your friends are welcome here any time.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Anderson.” George smiled gratefully. “Clay, should I go get them?”

“Mhm.”

And with that, George disappeared back out the front door.

“We’re so glad to have you home!” Michael beamed.

“And I’m glad to be back.” Clay leaned back on the couch.

“So what exactly are you and George doing in the Everglades?” Linda asked.

“Uh-”

George, help-

They wanna know what we’re doing-

Florida Panther, it’s endangered.

How the hell do you know that-

No clue. Now go-

Alright.

“Uh,” Clay resumed speaking, “There’s a couple of species ‘round here that are getting dangerously close to extinction. I’m helping him research some ways of stabilizing populations.”

“Ah, that sounds interesting.” Michael said blandly, in the tone that meant the exact opposite of what he said.

“Hey,” George called from the doorway, the litany of misfits trailing behind him. “This is everyone.”

“Come on in!” Linda stood from the couch.

Wait shit- What about Tommy and Tubbo-

Got it covered.

Everyone actually looked *normal*, which was a miracle.

Tommy had on a baseball cap to cover his plant-matter horn, and instead of the white and red t-shirt he had been wearing, he had donned a baggy black sweatshirt to hide the vines that covered his body. In this heat, he must be sweltering.

Tubbo was wearing a white and green striped bucket hat, which concealed his antennae. The black and yellow stripes on his cheeks were somehow gone, which mystified Clay. He also had on an olive-green button-up shirt with short sleeves.

“Mom, these are my friends. Tommy and Toby are our uh... *interns* from FSU. This is Phil Watson - he’s a professor, and Sylvee, one of George’s colleagues.”

Each one waved or nodded in turn, on their best behavior.

“Nice to meet you, Mr. and Mrs. Anderson.” Phil stepped forward to shake their hands.

Tubbo rushed right past them with Tommy, dragging a suitcase of tech behind him.

“Make yourselves at home,” Linda smiled. “Clay, we’ve kept your old room as you left it.” She turned to George. “And for your friends, there are two guest bedrooms down to the left - Clay can show you where they are.”

“Thank you so much.” George sighed in relief.

“Of course!” Linda laughed.

And then something very *strange* happened.

Her expression... glitched. Intense grief seeped into her features, twisting in anguish. But as soon as it came, it was gone. George wasn’t even quite sure it had happened.

“Mrs. Anderson, are you alright?”

She looked him in the eyes, and George could finally see the... *lack of life* behind them.

Something was *very, very wrong*.

Chapter End Notes

9.

Reminder that you can commission me to write you a story/fic!

Chapter Summary

8

===== *The Present.*

8.

“N-nick-” The man gasps, his hands clawing at my wrist.

He struggles for a few more agonizing moments, before going limp.

His hands drop; he stops struggling.

Is he dead?

“I-” He struggles to speak, “L-love you-”

Before I can react, his hands cup my neck and the back of my head, pulling me to him.

He presses his lips to mine - all the while I can feel the life leaving him-

This is too real-

This feels real-!

No-

Nononono-

I try to push him away, but he holds on like it’s the last thing he’ll ever do.

“I-love-you-I-love-you-I-love-you-” Tears roll down his cheeks.

He does love me.

No, I can’t let this happen!

But it’s just a dream.

No, this has to stop-

I'm afraid it's not done-

NO!

“Get AWAY from him!” Someone’s voice shouts from behind me, and I feel surprisingly strong hands rip my hand away from Karl’s throat.

Nick turned around, seeing a familiar figure standing before him.

Niki.

Karl coughed as his lungs took in air at last, sinking to the floor.

“What’s going on?” Eret poked his head out of his room, pausing when he saw the expression on Niki’s face. She was cradling her hands, scorched from touching Nick’s arm.

Nick looked down at his hands, trembling.

It wasn’t a dream.

Eret started to put two and two together, looking at Niki’s burned palms, then to Nick’s horrified expression, and at the way Karl’s hand was massaging his throat.

“Nick-” Karl started, his voice ragged.

The ravenette didn’t respond, rushing outside.

Even the weather seemed to mock him as he blinked at the bright morning sunlight. It was sunny, a cloudless day.

He hesitated on the front porch, fists clenched.

“Nick, wait!” Karl called after him.

The lava-boy turned back, looking into his fiancé’s wide eyes. Nick shook his head in horror, running out into the forest.

Eret sighed. “Niki, let’s take care of those burns.”

“Aren’t you going to go after him?” Karl hissed angrily, “He could do something-”

Fundy emerged from his room, yawning.

“No, he’ll come back.” Eret shook his head, guiding Niki to the sink and running cold water over her hands.

“What’s going on down there?” Zak said from over the balcony before running downstairs, nearly tripping on his own socks.

“Nick went insane.” Niki sighed, the last of the anger leaving her eyes. “He almost... he almost killed Karl.”

Both Zak and Fundy’s eyes widened.

“ *What?* ”

Nick ran through the forest, trampling undergrowth in his path, stumbling over roots.

He cried out as he fell down, his body hitting the dirt and leaves with a dull *thud*.

I almost killed him-

His hands were scratched up and raw almost to the point of bleeding glowing lava.

What have I done-

He shakily got to his feet, hyper-aware of everything around him. Every slight gust of wind, every bird blythely singing in the branches, the low gurgling of a stream nearby-

The stream.

He feverishly walked forward, following the sound of rushing water -- and there it was, the wooden bridge that arched across the shallow, and yet wide, stream.

He’d completely forgotten that he’d run out of the house without shoes until his bare feet hit the planks of the bridge. The wood instantly began to blacken underneath his feet, creating a morbid set of footprints as he strode across the bridge.

Nick reached the middle of the structure, gripping the railing with both hands.

It soon burst into flame, orange tendrils of flame dancing around the sides of his hands.

He made no effort to put it out, instead watching with rapt fascination. The fire spread a little in each direction, making its way to the wooden pillars that held up the roof of the bridge.

Those, too, succumbed to the blaze.

The deafening white noise roared in his ears as the roof caught alight, blackened and burning timbers falling all around him like demonic rain.

Nick continued to stare at the rushing water below him as the railing disintegrated under his hands, which fell numbly to his sides.

Flame started to creep across the floorboards, spreading outwards from his feet and inwards from the edges of the bridge.

I’m destroying everything around me.

Isn't that what I wanted?

The first of the floorboards to fall into the brook landed with a loud splash, a stray droplet landing on Nick's hand.

He grimaced numbly, but made no move to mitigate the pain.

"Nick!"

The lava-boy turned, eyes glazed over.

A dark blond man was standing on the bank of the stream, calling his name frantically.

"Nick-" He said again, sighing in relief upon seeing that Nick had seen him. "Get out of there, you're gonna fall!"

Does he not hate me?

Another board collapsed underneath him and he struggled to keep his footing.

"Nick, get out of there!"

Nick looked to the blackening wood beneath him, then to his fiancé.

Do I want to go back?

"Please, you idiot-" Karl laughed briefly at the pet name, smiling through the tears trailing down his cheeks. "I still love you, hothead."

What?

Nick seemed to snap out of his daze, stepping forward to escape the burning shell of wood-

And the boards collapsed under him.

"KARL-"

His shout was cut off by the deafening hiss of steam as he fell into the rushing waters.

Chapter Summary

7

“George, stop it-!”

“No, nonononononono...”

“C’mom, please! No, NO-”

=====

7.

“Clay, we need to talk-” George pulled the blond aside as soon as he had the opportunity.

“Hm?” Clay smiled as they walked into his old room. The walls were sky-blue with white clouds painted all over, and grand bay windows overlooking the back patio and pool. Stuffed animals were still strewn all around, crowding the solar-system comforter covering his bed.

George picked up one in particular, a blob-like thing that looked as if it had been through a lot of love.

“Dream!” Clay laughed, taking the plush from George’s hands. “I’d almost forgotten about this little dude.”

George tilted his head in curiosity, “That’s what you called yourself when you were stuck in SCP form.”

Clay turned the stuffed animal around. It was a white blob of sorts, with a cone-shaped body, a smile and small dot eyes sewn onto a round head.

“I remember making this with...” Clay trailed off, intense confusion creeping across his face.

“With who?”

Clay shook his head, “I don’t know.”

The brunet took the homemade stuffed animal back, hugging it. “Either way, it’s cute.”

Clay smirked, "So are you."

"How do you know?" George rolled his eyes sarcastically, "You can't even see me--"

He was cut off by Clay taking his shoulders and twisting him around, moving him to face a mirror on the wall. The blond wrapped his hands around George's waist, hugging him against Clay's chest.

"Oh, I can see you." Clay smiled, breath hot against George's ear. The brunet could feel a vibrant flush creeping along his cheeks.

"Wait, Clay--" George turned around in the taller man's arms, placing his hands on Clay's chest. "We really need to talk."

"What about?" The blond crossed his arms.

"Your parents, or your mom at least--" George started, taking care to not talk too fast. "Something's wrong."

Clay frowned, carefully walking over to lean against the wall. "What happened?"

"Well uh- I was talking to your mom, everything was fine, and then she... her expression kinda... how do I describe it - glitched?"

"What do you mean?"

George shifted uncomfortably, "She looked like she was in pain- like, *deep, emotional* pain. And a lot of it too. Then her face went back to normal, all happy."

"George, we're all stressed," Clay started. George opened his mouth to protest, but was cut off. "Maybe your mind's playing tricks."

George shushed him with a finger against Clay's lips.

"Clay, listen to me," the brunet hissed, his tone no longer charitable. "Why did your parents think you were stationed in Yemen?"

"I don't know, I might have slipped up--"

"You were gone for *years* more than you were supposed to." George added, pacing around the blue-walled room. "Clay- think, goddamnit!"

"I--"

"What if the Foundation's involved? Or worse, the Insurgency--" George started theorizing, running his hands through his hair in frustration.

"Hey," Clay caught George's wrists, "...maybe you're right."

"Maybe?!" George whispered vehemently. "You *know* this is too good. Too easy."

The blond sighed. After a moment, he looked up in hope.

“If you’re right, and *something* happened, I know a thing that they wouldn’t look for.” Clay walked out of his room, dragging George by the wrist.

“I made it when I was twelve, in case of emergency.” Clay was grinning oddly, opening a glass sliding door, stepping out of the kitchen and onto the back patio. Calm water lapped at the sides of the pool, sparkling in the Floridian sun.

“Emergency?” George wondered what that could possibly mean.

“Hold this-” Clay quickly took off his t-shirt and handed it to the brunet before taking a running leap into the pool.

“Clay, what the hell-” George chuckled as Clay dove into the cool water.

The blond operated by touch, running his fingers across the tiles at the bottom of the pool. George peered over the edge as Clay apparently found the tile he was looking for, prying it loose. The ceramic tile easily lifted, revealing a small hollow beneath -- from which Clay pulled a cylindrical container. He returned to the surface, hauling himself out of the pool and sitting on its edge.

“C’mere, Georgie-” He laughed, patting the concrete beside him. “It’s one of those time capsule things. I was obsessed as a kid.”

He pried open the lid, holding it out to George.

Inside were a few knick-knacks and trinkets, as well as some important-looking items, alongside a packet of some *very* old pop tarts. There was a small fossil bone, dried daisies in a ziplock bag, a harddrive, and a photo.

George peered at the photo curiously, noting the writing on the back.

Anderson Family Photo

The doctor flipped the photo around and gasped, nearly dropping the container.

Clay saw through George’s eyes what was in the photo-

“Wh- what-”

Clay’s parents were to the left, with twelve-year-old Clay on the right, his hand on the shoulder of a young girl who looked almost identical to him. The same blond hair, the same green eyes, the same confident smile.

A sister.

Chapter Summary

6

===== *The Present.*

6.

“Are we lost?” Clay mumbled anxiously as the camo-green Jeep Wrangler bounced its way through a path in the Everglades.

Sylvee shook her head vehemently, “According to Tubbo’s map, we’re right on track-”

The Jeep hit a stray root and gave a sickening jolt, sending its occupants flying a foot in the air.

“Watch the road, George!” Clay hissed, the bump having caught him quite off guard.

“Sorry-” The Brit responded, “It’s hard to keep one eye on the map and one on the road.”

Clay sighed as he returned to scoping out the marsh for stray minds. With his radar-like sense, there was no sneaking up on the trio of interlopers.

A sister-

I have a sister-

He furrowed his brows in concentration, unable to keep his mind off the girl in the photo. Who was she?

And why was she gone?

The familiar, nagging thread of a memory started to prod at the edge of Clay’s consciousness.

“No-” Clay muttered, “Not now-”

Another layer fractured.

=====

He hadn't slept in three days.

Clay stood frustratedly, staring at the culmination of his week's efforts.

A messy lab, and three vials of something dubiously green at best.

"Why isn't this *working*-" Clay cried out, sweeping his arm across a cluttered desk, sending its contents clattering to the floor.

He ran a hand through his hair, fighting the urge to rip it all out. He'd tried *everything*, and yet nothing seemed to work.

He glanced back at the singular vial of green blood, half depleted from various tests. All the solutions, the concoctions, the reductions, the chemicals he'd tried, nothing seemed to be able to turn a sample of blood back to "normal".

What was he doing wrong?

His sister was in a hospital, dying...

Because of him.

Clay strode over to his lab sink, frustratedly washing out petri dishes of failed experiments.

Because of him-

One of the glass dishes shattered in his hands, cutting deep gashes into his palms. He hissed in pain, trying not to scream.

He quietly winced as blood pooled in his palms, dripping down to the unwashed experiments below-

Then something curious happened.

Akin to an iodine clock reaction, the color of the petri dishes changed in a single moment, going from dull green to completely clear.

"Wh-" Clay grimaced as he gingerly picked up some of the unwashed petri dishes, disregarding the lacerations on his palms.

After all experiments were safely removed from the sink, he carefully wrapped his hands in gauze and padding, slipping latex gloves on over that.

Clay re-examined the dishes, trying to figure out just what had reacted with his blood. What baffled him was that all of the experiments had different variables, the only common element was-

His sister's blood.

“What if...” Clay murmured, reaching towards the half-empty vial of blood. He peeled off the latex glove on his left hand and carefully undid the dressing, wincing as he squeezed red blood from his palm and into the vial.

Instantaneously the solution became transparent as Clay wrapped his hand back up.

What had he just done?

=====

Clay woke from his memory with a gasp, cold sweat pricking at his palms as he clutched the backseat door-handle desperately.

George didn’t take his eyes from the path. “Clay, what happened-?”

“I-” Clay frowned, pausing as he sorted out all the thoughts running through his head, “It was a memory, about... I was in a lab, it looked like it was a Site, but-”

“But what?” George turned around to check on the mind reader, but hurriedly returned his focus to the path when he almost ran the Jeep off the road.

“It was about my sister, somehow-” Clay raised his voice to be heard over the engine and the crunching of the gravel road, “I was... I felt so *guilty* for some reason, but I don’t remember this at all, and if I was in the Foundation-”

He trailed off in horrid realization.

“Anderson, what-” Phil twisted in his seat to look at the Floridian.

“Back when George recruited me into the Foundation,” Clay started, shifting uneasily in his seat. “Everything from then on I can remember clearly. That was when I joined the Foundation, right?”

“Yes,” Phil raised an eyebrow, “That’s what’s in the database.”

“B-but that was a Foundation lab,” Clay’s voice softened, “Those were Foundation tools, a Foundation lab coat, but-”

“But what?”

Clay took in a deep breath. “I couldn’t have been in the Foundation. I remember everything past then perfectly, how was I in there before?”

George gasped. “Clay, I might be totally wrong - but there’s something I never told you about that day in Kansas-”

Clay glanced up in surprise, “What?!”

“Well, uh-” George tightened his grip on the steering wheel. “I wasn’t just *randomly* there.”

“What do you mean-”

“I was assigned to that diner for a reason.” George frowned, “Something about re-recruitment? I bumped into you, literally, we had breakfast, and then Site Command was telling me to come back to the Foundation, my mission was a success.”

Clay made a frustrated noise, “George, why the *fuck* didn’t you tell me this before?!”

“Because it didn’t seem important!”

“*Guys...*” Sylvee was staring out the window, her tone urgent.

“How is that not *important*, George?!”

“I don’t know! Maybe because-”

“*GUYS!*” Sylvee snapped, “Stop arguing like the Real Housewives of Atlanta for *three seconds*, and look out your damn windows!”

Both boys paused and followed her direction, and nearly jumped out of their skins when they finally spotted the imposing concrete building that was rapidly approaching.

“We’re here.” George parked the Jeep off the side of the path, its camo print providing better camouflage than expected.

“Clay, George, do your thing.” Sylvee said, putting a hand on George’s shoulder. The two of them faded into intangibility.

The blond took in a deep breath as he cloaked his own mind, and then reached out to Phil’s.

Once he was sure they were all invisible, they started towards the imposingly secured doors, steeling themselves for the infiltration of Area 23.

Phil let out a shaky breath. “Let’s go get these bastards.”

Chapter Summary

5

===== *The Present.*

5.

Nick woke up with a gasp, noticing he was safe, and on the couch in the living room of the farmhouse.

He jolted upright, wondering just how the hell he'd survived the treacherous waters. Karl sat on the opposite sofa, a book in hand, but seemed to be too restless to focus on the words.

Upon seeing Nick's sudden movement, Karl shot up and hurried over to Nick with a slightly concerned expression.

"Oh my goodness, you're awake-" Karl exclaimed, kissing Nick's forehead with a smile. "You really scared me, hothead."

It felt like another dream.

Maybe one that'd finally end well.

"How-" The ravenette began, checking himself for water-burns.

"I dove in after you," Karl cupped his fiancé's cheek, "Somehow managed to drag you out of there. I don't know why, but you didn't seem to be getting badly hurt. The water was mostly *evaporating* as it touched you."

Nick raised an eyebrow, and Karl chuckled.

"Don't make the pun, Nick."

"You know I gotta~"

"*Lord have mercy-*"

"I guess I really was just too hot-!" Nick shakily grinned, watching as Karl facepalmed. The lava-boy suddenly frowned, his expression darkening as his mind drifted away from the pun. "How long was I out?"

“Only a few hours.” Karl sighed, his hand trailing from Nick’s cheek down his arms, coming to settle on the lava-boy’s hands. “It’s about... 1 pm.”

“Where are the others?”

Karl shook his head, “I sent them into town. Fundy had to wear Will’s beanie, which he wasn’t... very happy with. Niki wanted to stay here with us, though she went with them eventually.”

Nick nodded and leaned forward to rest his head against Karl’s, taking deep but shaky breaths in and out.

“Karl, I-”

“Don’t say it, Nick.” Karl traced his left hand along his partner’s jawline, tipping Nick’s chin up to look him in the eyes. “I know. It’s ok.”

“What did I ever do to deserve you?” Nick murmured, grinning slightly as his hand rooted itself in the hair at the nape of Karl’s neck and pulled him forward, savoring the familiar feel of his partner’s lips against his.

No... ‘*against*’ wasn’t the right word. It was more like ‘*fitting with*’, the two seeming to move as one in the embrace, puzzle pieces fitting together-

Let’s snap his neck.

“*What tHE FUCK-*” Nick broke the kiss and scrambled away from Karl, nearly falling off the couch before he shot to his feet.

Karl looked up in alarm, “Wh- Nick, what’s wrong?! Did I bite you or something-”

“I can’t hurt him, not again, I can’t-” Nick mumbled, wild-eyed.

“Nick, what are you talking about?” Karl stood slowly, walking over to his partner.

“No- s-stay back-” Nick recoiled, edging away, “I’ll hurt you-”

“You’re not going to hurt me.” Karl said calmly. “We’re working through whatever’s happening *together*, ok?”

Nick shook his head slowly. “You don’t understand, it’s-”

Do it again, Nick.

Finish what you started.

Nick cried out and clutched at his skull, desperately trying to get these *thoughts* out of his head.

“Nick, what’s happening?”

The lava-boy bolted, pushing his way through the living room, pausing at the front doorway-

“I’m sorry, firebrand.”

And he disappeared outside, vanishing into the nearby cornfield.

“Nick, *wait!*”

But by the time Karl made it to the doorway, Nick was nowhere to be seen.

“Do you need new sweatshirts, Zak?” Darryl grinned, pointing to an array of hoodies on a rack.

Zak shrugged, “I guess. Why are we here again?”

“Karl wanted to be alone with Nick when he woke up.” Eret recalled, using Fundy’s shoulder as an armrest.

“Mmm.”

Darryl took a lavender sweatshirt from the rack and held it up to his boyfriend, “I like this one.”

Zak grinned and took it from him, “Then I do too.”

Techno rolled his eyes in the background. “Ew, love.”

Darryl sighed and bought the sweatshirt, an unfathomable boredom starting to settle over the group.

“There’s boba nearby,” Alba piped up, “Lucius, Anthony, Karl, and I used to go there a lot.”

Eret’s expression brightened. “Let’s go then! Might as well; Karl said to come back at two.”

As they exited the shops out onto the small town’s main street, Darryl wrapped a hand around Zak’s waist.

“Oh- hey,” Zak smiled.

“Hey yourself,” Darryl responded.

“Street preacher, dead ahead,” Eret’s voice suddenly spoke up, his tone drenched with anxiety.

“Oh.” Zak’s face fell as he pried Darryl’s arm away from his waist. “Let’s just-”

“No,” Darryl grinned mischievously, “C’mon, this way.”

The brunet's hand returned to its place on Zak's hip, the two walking straight towards the street preacher. He was shouting something about sin, never a good sign.

Darryl leaned over and kissed Zak on the cheek. "What are you doing-?" Zak looked at him quizzically.

"Nothing, *babe*." He smirked.

"What-" Zak smiled a little incredulously.

At this point, they'd gotten close enough for the preacher to have seen them. He froze, looking at the two in shock, his mouth wordlessly opening and closing.

"You want some boba tea, *babe*?" Zak grinned, starting to enjoy the shenanigans.

"Sure do, *honey*." Darryl laughed along.

"You're-" The preacher stammered, shaking his fist at them in a very boomer-like manner, "You're goin' to hell; renounce your sinful ways before-"

"Oh, fuck off." Darryl giggled, leading Zak away with a snarky grin.

Zak raised an eyebrow. *Where did that come from?*

They hurried back to the group, and now out of earshot, the two burst into giggles, the rest looking on with varying levels of amusement.

"Where did *that* come from?" Zak wheezed, "I swear, I've never seen you act like that-"

Darryl shrugged. "I'm not letting anyone make you uncomfortable."

The group continued towards the boba shop, and Zak smiled, glancing back at Darryl - but faltered as he noticed something.

There was an intensity there, an unnatural *power* that hadn't been there before.

He shook his head to clear the confusion there, and continued walking onwards with Darryl. The rest of the group fell in line behind them, with Eret making sure that the same preacher noticed his pink, purple, and blue striped socks.

The lava-hybrid barreled through the cornstalks, leaves cutting at his skin, desperate to get away, to put as much space between himself and his fiancé as possible.

Nick was strangely serene - perhaps a bit numb - as he stumbled into a small clearing amidst the corn stalks. There was nothing around but the expanse of azure sky, dotted with puffy clouds along the horizon, and rows upon rows of crops, separating him from those he could hurt.

Deep breath in.

Deep exhale out.

Out here, he couldn't hurt anyone.

People were safe.

From him.

It was better that way.

Deep breath in.

Deep exhale out.

He started to calm down, feeling the rush of adrenaline begin to fade.

The more that Nick thought, wracking his head for some sort of solution, one answer became abundantly clear.

Nick had always loved math as a kid. It was relaxing - always a set of right answers, always a way to find the truth.

But there were so many variables now, far too many unknowns to determine anything, each one pulling this way and that, skewing the balance-

And one of those variables was him.

The only way Nick could make sure Karl was safe was to remove himself from the equation.

It was peaceful, out here in the fields.

Nick looked up to the sun, feeling the warmth of his skin against the chill of November. He kept telling himself that this was the best thing he could do; taking himself out of the equation would do more good than harm.

Really, he was only attempting to convince himself.

I just hope he can forgive me.

You don't need to be forgiven.

"Shut UP!" Nick shouted, to no one in particular, "LEAVE ME ALONE!"

For a few moments Nick stood in apprehensive silence, but his mind remained quiet.

He sighed.

Would that *part* of him ever quit?

“Nick!”

The lava-boy whirled around to see the one person he least wanted to see.

Karl pushed through the last of the corn, staggering into the small clearing.

“You really scared me; I couldn’t find you!” Karl laughed, though he seemed concerned, walking forward. “Don’t do that again, ok?”

Nick looked on, horrified.

“Karl, no- you have to go back to the house-”

“Why?” Karl asked, taking another step towards Nick. “...tell me what’s wrong, hothead.”

Nick didn’t respond, unable to keep in the tears that were building up, letting out a pained sob.

Karl immediately pulled the ravenette into a hug, letting his t-shirt catch Nick’s tears before they burned streaks into Nick’s skin.

“Please don’t cry-” Karl whispered, “Just tell me what’s happening-”

“N-no-” Nick pushed himself away from the other, taking a few steps backwards.

“Nick...” Karl’s voice dropped dangerously low, something that normally would have scared the daylight out of the ravenette. “You can’t just close off - we’re in a relationship, that’s not how it works-”

Remove myself from the equation.

“Karl, I’m sorry-” Nick fought the urge to tear up again, “But I can’t- not like this. Not while I’m...”

“While you’re *what*? Nick, what are you saying?”

Words failed him, and he could find no response other than somberly untying his white headband. The knot coming undone, by his own hands no less, felt oddly symbolic.

He held out the cream-colored fabric. “I’m sorry, Karl.”

The blond didn’t know how to reply, backing away in horror. “You’re not- you can’t-”

Nick closed the distance and pressed the headband into Karl’s hands. “I hurt you. I can’t- I won’t hurt you again by staying with you.”

Karl looked up at him, remorse and disbelief clear in his eyes. “But I- I love you-”

You don’t love him.

Nick’s expression darkened at his own thoughts.

I love him more than I love myself.

“I love you too.” Nick smiled sadly, ignoring the sting of new tears on his cheeks. “But I can’t be engaged to someone that I could hurt.” He took a deep breath before he could choke on his words. “I’ll get my shit together, I *promise*, and then, Karl Jacobs, I will marry you.”

It was too silent, too calm, oxymoronic.

Karl shook his head slightly, stepping forward to cup Nick’s cheek in his hand. “We can do this together, you don’t have to go-”

Nick leaned down to kiss the shorter man’s forehead. “I have to do this.”

“No- nononono-”

Nick backed away from his partner, leaving him stunned where he stood.

“I’m sorry.” And with a sad smile, Nick disappeared back into the wavering gold of the cornfield.

A few moments later, a muffled cry of anguish echoed across the serene midwestern afternoon.

Chapter Summary

4

Chapter Notes

Warning for violence.

===== *The Present.*

4.

Terrifyingly enough, breaching the perimeter of the compound had been the easy part. *Incredibly easy.* Too easy. It made Clay sick to his goddamn stomach. The sentries they'd seen were all but vanished- when the group had come across one lone armed guard around the outside of the building, they were either sleeping or just not paying attention. Nothing had gone wrong- on the contrary, it was going better than they thought.

There's no better way to make you feel like you're about to die than to make everything *go right.*

"Guys."

Sylvee's voice buzzed in George's ear over an earbud, static rich in the connection. The connection hadn't been that bad no matter where they were- maybe the site had some kind of jamming signal.

But why wasn't it working completely?

George noticed a few seconds too late that Sylvee's voice was shaking.

"I found a dead body."

Clay felt his partner's hand clench around his wrist painfully tight- ironically enough it was serving as an anchor to keep Clay lucid and in reality. The pressure of keeping a whole group of people invisible, plus scanning for minds, plus-

Plus the odd *oppressive* mental load of being here. It was nothing he'd ever experienced before. It was like someone had carved out the marrow from his bones and replaced his skin with molten lead- everything felt too light and also too heavy.

"*A dead body?!*" Phil's voice chimed into the static.

"*I...*" Sylvee didn't sound like herself- she'd seen a dead body before. She was a researcher, for the love of god- she'd had to cut open a body before. "*It's... the nervous system was physically ripped out of his body through the neck.*"

...what. The. Fuck.

"*I'm sorry, did you say ripped out?*" George quietly tapped on the earbud to respond. "*How do you even do that-*"

"*His spinal cord went with it.*"

Clay's mind didn't even fully process any of it. A blinding pain behind his eyes was growing ever steadier.

George, beside him, swallows heavily. "*Any idea what did it?*"

The sound of Sylvee's nervous shallow breathing filled the air for a few moments. "*No alarms. No alerts. No lockdown. If this is a breach, no one knows about it yet.*"

George couldn't decide if that was better or *a lot fucking worse*.

"Is the body mutilated besides that?" Phil suddenly piped up again.

"*No. There's... Oh god- there's a gaping hole in the neck, but- nothing else. Not even a scratch. It was almost clinical.*"

Clinical.

Something about that triggered Clay's mental alarm bells. Badly. "We need to leave."

"*What? We just got here-*" Phil hissed through the mic.

"Trust me, we need to go- "

"*Wait why? Did you see something?*" Sylvee asked. "*Another body?*"

Clay felt an odd sense of relief for a moment, not knowing why.

And then he realized what had happened.

What had lightened the mental load.

The number of minds on his radar had decreased.

“Fuck. Fuck. Shit-” Clay cursed not-so-quietly and let go of George, breaking the invisibility trick. It’s not like there were any guards to see them anyway- “Sylvee where was the body? I need to know *now*-”

“I uh- southwest hall. The body’s been there for only minutes, I’m guessing.”

Another vanished. Closer this time.

Oh, *shit*.

A guard’s mind sputtered out and disappeared. Only a few hundred feet away.

“It’s coming for us.”

“It?!” Phil’s voice squeaked out, *“The hell is it?!”*

“Minds are blinking out.” Clay’s hushed whisper barely registered on his earbud mic. “In a line. Towards me.”

George’s hand grabbed the shapeshifter’s wrist once more. “Clay we need to *go*-”

Clay numbly could hear Sylvee hiss out orders to the others on the line, quickly trying to get her people out. It was fruitless, Clay knew that much.

“...it’s me.”

“That doesn’t fucking make sense, Anderson.” Phil barked. *“Get your head in the game and run, damnit-!”*

A scream rang out in the eerie silence of the clinical hallways.

A girl stepped out from around the corner, her hands covered in blood.

In her hands was a glistening blood-drenched human spine. The nerves were still attached to it, little hair-like tendrils hanging down and branching out.

It’s her.

The girl looked up, and locked eyes with the blind man across from her.

And Clay could *see her*.

Not through George’s eyes, not via some kind of proxy- he could actually *see his sister*. The girl from his memories, the one who’d been wiped from his mind and his parents’ minds-

His eyes shifted from a milky pale green to their former emerald.

“CLAY, RUN-! THE GUARDS, IT WAS A SETUP- THEY’RE AN AMB-”

Sylvee’s voice was cut out with a sickening cracking noise and a scream of pain.

And gunshots.

As soon as Clay had the wherewithal to actually look around and step towards his sister, *Emily-*

She ran.

She ran down another hallway, her bare feet leaving behind bloody footprints as she ducked into an empty containment unit, sitting in the middle with her knees drawn to her chest.

“Emily!” Clay shouted and he started to run after her.

George phased in front of him and held him back, panic and confusion rampant in the brunet’s eyes. “What are you doing-? They got Sylvee- we need to go rescue them-”

“Not without Emily.”

Clay brushed past George and sprinted the rest of the way to the containment.

As the doors to the unit closed behind him, Clay knew he’d royally, seriously, and maybe even fatally fucked up. And he was alone in the unit with his long-lost sister, who, until a short while ago, he didn’t even know he had.

“*No!*” Sylvee’s voice shouted, nearly shaking off the guard who kept her kneeling on the floor. She and Phil were trapped behind observation glass, held at gunpoint. “*Let him out!*”

Phil hung his head, going limp in defeat.

“It’s okay-” Clay called back, walking further into the room. “I’m fine.”

There was a small commotion, a zapping sound-

“Clay, I’m here!” George’s voice called out as he smoothly phased through the black metal doors.

Emily didn’t react to George’s arrival remaining seated against the wall.

“Oh god-” Clay rushed over to meet him, taking the brunet’s hand in his. “Thank you.”

George turned his gaze towards Emily, then back to Clay. “I’m by your side, always.”

Clay nodded, eyes full of gratitude.

He led George over to where Emily sat, as the girl looked numbly at them.

“E-Emily?” Clay asked softly, letting go of George’s hand to kneel by his sister.

She smiled. “*Hello, brother.*”

Clay sighed in relief as he pulled her in for a hug. She hesitantly returned it, before Clay pulled her to her feet. “Let’s get out of here.”

She didn't budge.

Clay turned, staring at her. "Wh- hey, let's go-"

She grinned chillingly, short blond hair falling in front of her eyes.

She shouldn't have been smiling.

Why is she smiling-

"We're not stuck in here together."

Clay let go of her wrist, backing away. "No, *no-*"

"You're trapped in here with me."

George sprang into action, seizing Clay's hand and yanking him towards the door. "C'mon, I can phase us out-"

"What about my sister?!" Clay shouted, eyes wide. "We can't just-"

"We have to leave her!" George hissed, "We'll come back, I promise!"

"Who says you can do that?"

George gritted his teeth, "My *powers* fucking say so."

She chuckled lightly.

And then again.

Then she giggled-

And she laughed, maniacal laughs echoing off the smooth walls of the containment unit.

"We have to go!" George dragged Clay towards the door, beginning to phase out-

And then George stopped dead in his tracks.

Clay stumbled, almost falling to the floor as they both crashed back into reality. George stood there, staring blankly ahead.

Emily was laughing again.

Clay cried out in pain, clutching his head. It felt as if a pike was being driven into his brain, swirls of light and darkness dancing in his mind's eye.

She was trying to mind control him-

GET OUT OF MY HEAD!

Concentrating as hard as he could, Clay fought off her influence.

So I can protect myself from her.

Emily was casually leaning against the wall, standing and watching.

“Huh. You’re strong enough to resist.” She shrugged. *“Doesn’t matter.”*

Zap!

Clay spasmed as electricity arced through his body, sending him collapsing to the floor.

Clay HELP ME-

I’M NOT DOING THIS!-

GEORGE?

SHE’S- OH GOD, CLAY HELP ME!-

And with that, George’s mind fuzzed to blank static.

“Heh.” George scoffed. “You-”

“George, whatever she’s making you do-”

George just stood there, indifferent.

Well,

Unless you counted the tears streaming down his cheeks.

“You’re gonna *die*, Anderson.”

Clay’s eyes widened. No, this couldn’t be happening-

Sparks flew from George’s fingertips as he phased out of reality, rendering him both physically *and* mentally invisible. Clay couldn’t even sense his mind anymore.

The blond stood shakily, facing his sister once more.

“Emily, why are you-”

Wham!

George’s fist collided with Clay’s jaw, sending him staggering to the side. He tasted blood and his lip split.

“Emily, please-” Clay pleaded, scrambling out of the way just fast enough to avoid a bolt of electricity, leaving a mark on the spot he had been mere moments before. “Stop, you’re hurting him!”

She showed no mercy, remaining coolly detached, leaning casually against the wall, arms crossed.

“Please-!” Clay cried out as an arc of lightning cut a burning slash across his arm.

Emily smiled, cruel joy creeping into her features as George shoved Clay to his knees. He could feel her power starting to crack his own defenses -- time was running out.

“You’re my *sister*-” The blond whispered, looking up at Emily, searching her face for any vestiges of sympathy. “I know you think what you’re doing is right-”

Clay felt George’s hand press on the back of his neck, disturbingly cold and unfeeling.

The air started to crackle with electricity, the buildup of charge increasing-

Emily knelt down and took Clay’s chin in her hand.

“I’m afraid you have to be stopped.”

NonnoNONONONO-

“Hey, at least he’ll enjoy it.”

How can I convince her?

How can I show her that what she’s doing is-

Clay’s eyes widened in realization.

“Finish him,” Emily muttered with a dismissive wave of her hand, walking off towards the chamber’s exit.

That was when Clay knew that the only way out, the only way to escape dying by his lover’s hand...

Was to give up.

Chapter Summary

3

Chapter Notes

This chapter is shorter, but will be compensated in the later two chapters. Never fear!

===== *...Time Unknown.*

3.

"It's happening."

Clay's voice grows excited as he shrugs off his lab coat. He glances over at George, winking one bottle-green eye before stepping onto the metal platform in front of him. An expansive lab like a cavern surrounds them, industrial ceilings and exposed air ducts adding to a feeling that great feats of science took place here.

"Wait, *now*?" George crosses his arms with a wry grin. "How can you be sure?"

"Call it a hunch." The blond shrugs. An assistant tosses him some sort of device, and Clay catches it out of the air gently.

"You remember how to use the neural dampener?"

"Yes, darling. I remember."

"And you remember how much time you have before you come back?"

"Ten minutes, seven seconds." Clay nods. "George, I'll be alright."

The short doctor darts up to the platform and hugs his husband tight in his arms, pecking him on the cheek before retreating to a safe distance. The sound of combat boots clicking on metal floors alerts the two doctors to new arrivals.

"Going without us?" A certain fox-eared scientist grins, one ear flicking in anticipation. "Eret and I wanted to make sure everything went smoothly."

"Is Niki not with you?" George raises an eyebrow.

Fundy shakes his head. "She's with Sylvee and Wilbur. Nick's going through his last treatment today, and they wanted to be with him at the Beta Site."

Clay breaks into a warm smile at the mention of his hotheaded friend. "I'm glad they're with him."

Fundy bows his head slightly with a smile and steps back with George.

"Ready, Anderson?" Eret's voice makes itself known over the site intercom, and the glowy-eyes scientist waved from his control booth.

"Project Lazarus is a go, Flashlight." Clay laughs, blowing George a kiss before stepping to the center of the platform. Two rings of electromagnetic coils rest below the floor and above Clay's head, around three feet in diameter. "We sure this works?"

"We kinda know it does." Eret raises an eyebrow. "You technically would cease to exist if it didn't."

"... that's comforting."

George laughs. "See you in ten, Stevie Wonder."

The last thing Clay remembers thinking before the machine starts up and everything goes black?

Not the damn blind jokes again-

===== ***The Present (?)***

Clay saw nothing. Felt nothing. Heard nothing.

And yet he somehow knew he was alive.

Clay frowned- that was a lie.

He did feel something.

Clay could feel his life force being sucked dry from his bones.

His own sister, shattering the remnants of his mind to pieces.

His death.

For real, this time.

===== ***The Present.***

Sylvee's eyes widened as a flash of blinding white light pulsed from inside the containment chamber. Was that it? Was that flash the death of her friend? Had she failed that badly? Her tear-stained cheeks were scraped raw with the blows from the guards holding her down- if only she had something to hit them with-

The light faded enough for her to see past the blast glass.

"No, that's *impossible*-" She didn't know whether or not she was relieved or terrified.

Standing in front of her, holding some kind of device over Emily's head...

Was another Clay.

Two Clays.

One, slumped in George's hands, electricity arcing off of him as the brunet sobbed, unable to control his own body-

The other standing calmly behind Emily with a black headset. The moment it was placed on her head, the girl slumped. She was fast asleep. The new Clay caught her lightly and laid her down with the care and caution of a brother before walking over to George and... the original Clay.

"He's going to be alright." Other-Clay smiled, kneeling down and handing George a tissue as if he'd known already that one would be needed. "And you will be too. In time."

"What?" George looked up with shaky and watery eyes. "No, I- I killed him-"

Other-Clay shook his head with a sad smile.

"He's already been dead for five years."

Chapter Summary

2

Chapter Notes

If you want more updates on my planned sequel "Undeniable" and prequels "Untouchable" and "Unbreakable", follow me on twitter and add me on discord!

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(extra gentle reminder that you can commission me to write you stories on my patreon!)
<https://www.patreon.com/JayWrites23>

===== ***The Present.***

"He's been dead for five years."

The world ground to a halt as George stares in horror at the imitator of his lover. "I don't believe you."

His mind spun with the memories of the Agent C. debacle- how could he be sure that this wasn't just another one of the shapeshifter's tricks?

Other-Clay sighed and sat down across from George, glancing at his watch. "I have around nine minutes and forty seconds. What I want you to do is think of a number and a color. Doesn't matter what. I already know what you'll pick because you've *told me this before.*"

George's mouth opened and closed like a fish- how the *hell* was this man even here? And if it was Clay- or at least, some version of him- what would happen if George made a mistake in *not* trusting him?

He thinks of his number and color.

Ultraviolet twenty-three.

Other-Clay chuckled and shook his head. "Ultraviolet twenty-three. I might add that ultraviolet isn't an actual color, but- y'know, whatever makes you feel safe."

Now *that* made George's jaw hit the floor. "What- how did you know that? Are you just a Hybrid with his powers, what are you-"

"Gogy, I need you to *listen* to me." Other-Clay started to look nervous as he glanced at his watch again.

7:58

"I died years before we met." The green-eyed blond started to spew out words, like he was running out of time.

"What-?"

"I was taken into Foundation custody for conducting illegal experiments." His face fell as he started to explain what had actually happened. "Because I wanted to save my sister."

"I- that's impossible, you would never-"

"Emily was exposed to dangerous levels of exposure as a child." Other-Clay continued, holding up a finger for George to be silent. "Our parents were busy when she was younger so I used to have to take her to work with me- at the Foundation. Every time she'd accidentally see an SCP, her memories would be erased and replaced. And once... she was exposed to an SCP that no one should ever see. Should ever touch. Should ever know of."

George fell silent of his own accord. He didn't know why the hell the Foundation would have ordered to take Clay into custody-

"He," Other-Clay gestures to the original lover in George's arms, lifeless. "Doesn't know it yet. He won't remember what happened for weeks. And he'll never forgive himself."

"Why are you telling me this?"

"Because it's the only way-" He grabbed George's hand with earnest intent. "If I don't come back and save him from Emily, and if you don't know how to end DeVries... it's over."

DeVries?! What the- did Clay have something to do with its creation?!

"What happened to her." George's voice took on a serious tone as he gathered the limp body to his arms, hugging it as if some life would seep back in.

5:36

Other-Clay nodded solemnly. "There's a storage facility under Area 51 that houses some of the most dangerous SCPs we know of. One of them, we call the Sheaf of Papers."

George wasn't familiar with that name personally, but from Other-Clay's tone... no bueno.

"Emily was mistaken for a D-Class slated for exposure testing. They took her while I was distracted with something else, and before I knew it-"

The brunet claps a hand over his mouth in horror. Emily, a young child, was in the same room as a dangerous SCP *infohazard*?!

"Emily thought they were playing, so she *went over to it*-" The blond's voice cracked, and he cleared his throat. "By the time I got there, the Sheaf had... absorbed her. I tried to pull her free."

Sylvee listened with shocked ears from the safety of the observation booth. She couldn't believe all she was hearing- she knew what the Sheaf of Papers was. It was only a myth, really- but- from what Clay was saying, it was real?

The Sheaf of Papers is a theory of what SCP-001 truly is. Even knowing its nature is said to break the mind in ways that would kill. Was that what made Emily... that way?

"It finished with her." Clay struggled to get through the next few sentences. "And when I tried to save her, it... it killed me. My brain literally exploded with its knowledge."

George felt his breath stick in his lungs. He- how did he not know? What was it like for him- why couldn't he have helped-

"Then how are you here?" George stammered out, shocked beyond belief.

"She saved me," Clay muttered quietly. "Emily had been given... powers by that *thing*. She brought me back to life. And- I guess in doing so- gave me a fraction of her own powers."

"...which is why the two of you have such similar Hybrid traits." George looked down at *his* Clay with broken-hearted eyes.

"She got sicker and sicker over the next years. I couldn't do anything but watch." The live Clay spat out. "I started experimenting with everything I could, until..."

"Until?"

"When my blood combined with hers, it cured the ailment. I didn't even have my Hybrid powers at the time- that wasn't till after I injected myself with the cure- very much unauthorized experimentation."

George's stomach dropped straight to hell with that sentence.

"And that's when they erased my memories for the first time," Other-Clay said cautiously. "A factory reset if you will. And we met right after that."

"You..."

Other-Clay looked up to see a very-angry, very-pissed-looking Sylvee standing in the doorway. "You *made* DeVries. You're responsible for *all* the death that's happened since that day-"

3:11

The blond looked at Sylvee in apology, then quickly put Emily's limp hand on top of the dead Clay's chest. "He'll wake up in half an hour. I- I don't have much time, I have to go-"

"What?!" George yelled, "You can't just leave us here-"

"Time travel ain't cheap, Gogy." A small chuckle graced the other's smile as he stood up and walked backward a little bit. "Plus, all the guards are taking a little nap."

Sylvee blinked and looked outside the hallway where the ambush had greeted them. At least two dozen armed guards were sound asleep on the linoleum flooring, some of them even cuddling each other and snoring.

Other-Clay must have had a shit ton of practice with

1:31

"Everything's going to be okay, I promise." Clay quickly reached down and hugged his past lover, taking a moment to savor it. A moment he didn't have to spare. "In three years, we adopt a kid."

"Wh- huh?"

"His name's Alex." The blond nodded, his eyes growing hot as he smiled. "He's the best thing that'll ever happen to us."

George couldn't process. "We- we-"

"Please George for the love of all that we have-" He stepped back once more, looking at his watch.

0:18

"You can fix this. For him. For Nick and Karl, for Fundy and Eret and Niki and Wilbur and Phil and everyone that loves us."

George nodded in a daze.

Other-Clay smiled calmly and sadly as the light started to build up again.

0:07

"See you in half an hour, my love."

0:05

0:04

0:03

0:02

0:01

The smell of smoke on an eastward wind wafts over Omaha.

What's next?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

LORE.

Listen up, this announcement is very important. It will have *lasting repercussions* on future stories in the Uncon universe.

The next chapter will be the last ever chapter of Uncontainable...

Crazy, right?

To think that I started writing this in August of 2020- and now it's almost August, two years later... that's insane to me. I'm unironically very much enjoying my time on Ao3, perhaps a bit more than my time on Wattpad. However those people who followed the migration will always be very near and dear to my heart. Little did y'all know that your theorizing on the discord server gave me *so many* ideas. Without your love and support, Uncon wouldn't be half as good.

Now- on to the announcement.

While we wait for the inevitable ball to drop of Uncontainable's final chapter, here's something for you to chew on in the meantime.

There are now three, yes ***three***, sequels now in development.

Originally they were all going to be "epilogues" of a sort, but I fell in love with each of the ideas to a point where I had too much to just limit them to one chapter or post.

And here I am, planning three new books.

Lemme run you through them.

Undeniable: I've had this planned since spring of 2021, tbh. It's focused on a remote Site in the middle of the Pacific ocean, where only the most puzzling and/or dangerous of the SCPs

are kept. It focuses on the story of a stoic doctor who may or may not be an SCP himself- they just call him Corpse. He, and another mysterious SCP named Ranboo that appears to have gained full sentience, are tasked with solving a mysterious series of disappearances before the entire Site succumbs to this new antagonist. This takes place *before* Uncontainable.

Unbreakable: Essentially, the spin-off story of Halo and Zak. Have you ever wondered where Halo came from? His real backstory? How he and Darryl met? How Zak got his diamonds, and what happened when he did?
Are you currently wondering what happened to Halo?
Or have you forgotten that he's still uncaged?

Untouchable: The continuation of Nick and Karl's story. *The smell of smoke wafts eastward over Omaha.* The story takes place in Nebraska, at the farmhouse. It centers around Nick and Karl, but also becomes the home of another set of unlikely guests... it's a journey of conquering one's demons, both physical and mental. What's the source of Karl's durability? Why is Nick the only one with an inner voice urging him to destroy?
Come find out.

Okay now that you've read those- I have a task for you guys.

Below I have linked a twitter poll on my page, and I want you to go vote on which book you want me to work on *first*.

Don't worry, they'll all get done, I just want to know which one you guys want to see the most!

Thank you so much! I love you guys!

~ Jay <3

Chapter End Notes

Click here to vote on which sequel you want to come out first...

<https://twitter.com/jaywrites23/status/1550328701094699009>

filename_LORE.html

user.philza.admin@scp.director.net cannot be found. Please re-enter your credentials.

Sorry, user. This data, "devries-history.html" is only available to Level Five Security Clearance and above. Please login with your SCP Foundation email and password to proceed.

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Thank you for your time, user. Come back soon!

"U2hIGlzIHRyYXBwZWQuIFNoZSBpcyBpbiBwYWluLiAKTGV0IGhlciBkaWUu"
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"U2hIGlzIHRyYXBwZWQuIFNoZSBpcyBpbiBwYWluLiAKTGV0IGhlciBkaWUu"

code_name_UNCONTAINABLE.txt will be updated to all appropriate users tomorrow.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!